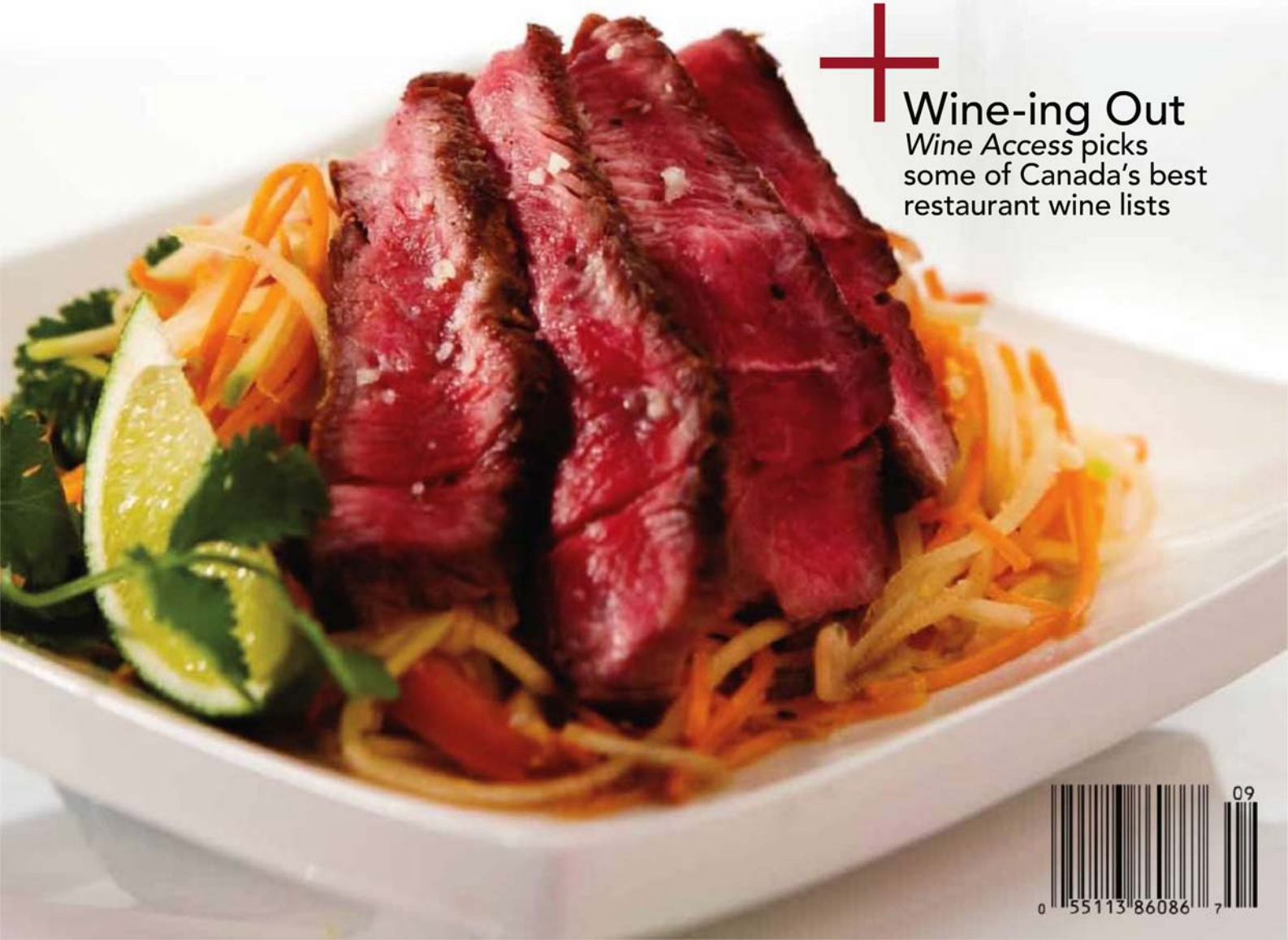
CANADA'S WINE MAGAZINE

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2010 • wineaccess.ca

WINEACCESS

TAKEOUT TONIGHT

No time to prepare a home-cooked meal? We dress up 8 classics, from barbecue to Thai, and pour on the wine



+ Wine-ing Out

Wine Access picks some of Canada's best restaurant wine lists

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The FETZER Great Beginnings Appetizer Challenge

The Fetzer Great Beginnings Appetizer Challenge has found its niche as one of the most keenly contested culinary challenges on the Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival—which is widely hailed as one of the leading wine events of its kind anywhere.

The format requires participating restaurant chefs to create a dish to pair with a Fetzer wine of their choice.

Each year, as chefs vie for top honours, the calibre of entries presented to the judging panel of food professionals rises, a barometer of the thriving Vancouver dining scene at large.

Every dish is judged for its creativity and presentation—the originality and regional emphasis of its ingredients and, of course, flavours and taste. However, the key component in scoring a winner is the way in which the dish interacts with the paired Fetzer wine.

The nod this year went to Goldfish Pacific Kitchen sous-chef Tom Lee, who crafted pan-seared wild salmon topped with tea-smoked Japanese scallop sashimi, with smoked salmon custard and hints of ginger-marinated Asian pear coconut reduction.

The complex range of locally sourced ingredients was no accident:

"We try to use local and sustainable products from here in BC as much as possible," says Lee (who actually filled in at the last minute for executive chef William Tse, who conceived the dish).

There's a fair degree of preparation behind this plate, as Lee explains.

"The wild salmon is marinated in soy and jalapeño for about a day. "We then just sear that briefly to medium rare."

As for the scallop, "Anyone can sear a scallop and anyone can make sashimi," says chef Lee, who adds that the Goldfish team went looking for a less obvious approach to make their dish stand out.

"We decided to use normal smoking techniques over wood. But then we infused the scallop with jasmine tea and cold smoked it twice, before sliced it paper thin and placing it fanned under the salmon."

The other crucial component to the plate is the coconut reduction—comprised of coconut milk with lemon grass, ginger, star-anise and a little garlic, combined and reduced to about one half of its volume, then strained, to achieve the right thickness and consistency, says the chef.

"This way, I think the flavours become much more apparent," he says.

Overall, smoking brings out the sweetness of the scallop—which made sense, especially considering the more off-dry style of the Gewurztraminer, he suggests.

Chef Lee says this style of food is a perfect reflection of what's transpired to build such a diverse food scene in Vancouver over the past few years.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Vancouver, Lee has trained extensively in New York, Montpelier and London (where he worked for Gordon Ramsay—an experience he wouldn't have traded for the world. And would repeat again in a flash!). Those travels proved invaluable but now, back in Vancouver, the chef says his inspiration comes from blending the cuisine of his Chinese heritage with the use of local ingredients as much as possible.

"Vancouver is so diverse. Everyone has such great, adventuresome palates. People are ready to try anything," he says. "The diner is much more progressive here; we can put a range of traditional Asian flavours into our food and the western palate appreciates it."

As for the winning dish, which wowed the panel, is there any one ingredient that makes the wine sing, in particular?

"Unquestionably, it's the scallop," he says, suggesting that salmon has maybe become just a little bit passé.

"The textural contrast between the warm salmon and the cold, smoky flavours, and the umami of the scallop are what really work with the wine," says Lee.

And we agree. This dish, especially with its hint of spice from the jalapeno, was a slam dunk for the off dry, gently spicy Gewurztraminer.

As far as choosing which wine with which to work, was the Gewurztraminer. a natural choice?

"I pick the wines I enjoy drinking," says the chef.

"And this Gewurztraminer—aside from going so well with the plate—is what I love to drink."

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By Anthony Gismondi, DJ Kearney, Gurvinder Bhatia, Tom Firth, Ben MacPhee-Sigurdson, David Lawrason, Steve Thurlow, John Szabo, Bill Zacharkiw and Craig Pinhey

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By Anthony Gismondi

ON THE WEB

More of Canada's best restaurant wine lists.

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Eat, Drink and Be Merry

Seeking the perfect wine and food pairing is always an elusive exercise, but when you get it right, each is a celebration of the other. Alas, like most consumers, I rarely put much thought into pairing what I would describe as good wine with takeout. In fact, unless I am scanning, ravenous, through various menus, or the thought of cooking after a long day sends me heading for pick-up on the way home, I rarely think about takeout at all. And yet, I grew up in a home where family dinners, more often that not, left a trail of aluminum foil and Styrofoam containers strewn across the counters. Some of my favourite meals have been takeout shared in a magnificent spread on the dining room table — won ton soup, platters of shawarma, moussaka, barbecue ribs.

At *Wine Access*, we know the magic of wine pairing is revealed when the right wine and the right food turn an ordinary meal into a dining event. The food doesn't have to be fancy, and it certainly doesn't have to be scratch-home-cooked. Just the time spent thinking about presentation and pairing makes us slow down and appreciate the experience. We don't have to treat takeout like fast food — we should take in the flavours, enjoy the food, enjoy the wine and appreciate our dining companions.

This issue is a celebration of food and wine, either when dining at home or when benefitting from the thoughtfulness and presentation of sommeliers and chefs when eating out. Each meal is an opportunity for pleasure, so go; eat and enjoy.

Abby Miller
Managing editor
amiller@wineaccess.ca

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KASEY WILSON is an award-winning food and travel writer and broadcaster. She is food editor of *Wine Access* magazine and editor of *Best Places Vancouver.* Her articles have appeared in *National Geographic, Bon Appétit* and *Gastronomica.* She is the author of eight non-fiction books and a member of the Society of American Travel Writers and the Association of Food Journalists. Along with Anthony Gismondi, she hosts *The Best of Food and Wine*, a weekly radio show where they talk food and wine with many of the industry's top players. Kasey is an online contributor to Condé Nast's concierge.com and gayot.com.

GURVINDER BHATIA left a career practicing law to pursue his passion (some might say obsession) for wine and food. He is the wine columnist for CBC Radio Edmonton, contributing editor for *Tidings* and the owner of Vinomania wine boutique. His travels, seeking wines with a sense of place, and as an international wine judge, are simply an excuse for him to eat and drink his way around the world. He loves bourbon, tequila and wines so good that the only description warranted is, "Wow!"

TOM FIRTH started in the industry back in 1996 when he began working in wine retail. These days he is the Events and Promotions Manager for *Wine Access*, as well as a frequent contributor to Calgary's *City Palate* magazine and a past contributor to the *Wine Access Canadian Wine Annual.* He is a member of the *Wine Access* National Tasting Panel and writes the "No Time for Bad Wine" blog for the magazine.

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THE BEST FROM EVERY
TOP CHILEAN VALLEY

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GRAN RESERVA

Cabernet Sauvignon — *Maipo Valley*

91 POINTS	WINE SPECTATOR 2008 Value Wine / Smart Buy	vintage 2005
91 POINTS	WINE & SPIRITS Year's Best Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon	vintage 2006
91 POINTS	WINE SPECTATOR Top 100 Wines of 2009	vintage 2006
91 POINTS	WINE SPECTATOR Great 50 Buys 90 Points	vintage 2006
91 POINTS	WINE & SPIRITS	vintage 2007
90 POINTS	WINE ACCESS	vintage 2007
GOLD MEDAL	INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALENGE	vintage 2007

Carmenere "New Release" — *Colchagua Valley*

90 POINTS	WINE SPECTATOR	vintage 2007
90 POINTS	WINE ENTHUSIAST	vintage 2007
90 POINTS	WINE SPECTATOR Great 50 Buys 90 Points and Highest ($15-20)	vintage 2007
90 POINTS	WINE & SPIRITS	vintage 2008
GOLD MEDAL	INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALENGE	vintage 2008

Pinot Noir "New Release" — *Leyda Valley*

GOLD MEDAL	INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALENGE	vintage 2008

Sauvignon Blanc — *Leyda Valley*

88 POINTS	WINE SPECTATOR	vintage 2008
RECOMMENDED TOP VALUE	WINE SPECTATOR	vintage 2008

Chardonnay — *Limarí Valley*

88 POINTS	WINE ENTHUSIAST	vintage 2007
90 POINTS	WINE & SPIRITS	vintage 2008

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Stratus takes the LEED

The global wine industry is becoming increasingly environmentally conscious. Many wine producers' commitment to these green principles and practices extend beyond the bottle into the wineries themselves. Form and aesthetics are increasingly taking a back seat to function in ensuring that facilities have as little environmental impact as possible. And, just as producers can have their wines certified as organic or biodynamic, Canadian wineries are seeking certification for the winery structures themselves.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, is a green building rating system that is North American in origin and is now becoming recognized worldwide. It is a suite of standards for the environmentally sustainable design, construction and operation of buildings and neighbourhoods. And, in 2005, Stratus Winery in Niagara, Ontario, was the first building in Canada to receive LEED certification from the Canada Green Building Council and the first winery in the world to be so recognized. Stratus' 20,128-square-foot facility is silver-certified, which represents a savings of 42 percent in overall energy, 49 percent in indoor water use and 15 percent in raw materials.

The winery buildings, designed by Niagara architect Les Andrew, use geo-exchange technology for heating and cooling and were constructed with a high percentage of recycled materials. The mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are all resource- and energy-efficient. There is a comprehensive waste management program and a landscape plan that is organic and based on indigenous and adaptive grasses and plants.

Stratus was the first, but is has not been the last. The Okanagan Valley's Tantalus Vineyards was the latest producer to open a LEED-certified winery this past May. This summer visitors will be able to fully appreciate the high-tech new winery when they enjoy tastings in the brand-new 13,000-square-foot facility. *(Steve Thurlow)*

AN·THRO·POSO·PHY

Anthroposophy is a philosophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century, that proposes the existence of an accessible spiritual world that is reachable through personal intellectual development. The roots of biodynamic farming lie in a series of lectures on agriculture given by Steiner, describing how a farm is an organism whose health depends on the well-being of its crops, animals and farmer. Steiner suggested nine different fertilizer and compost preparations that are believed to transfer supernatural forces into the soil; these preparations are still used on biodynamic farms today. *(Karin Nybo)*

REDUCE, REUSE, REHARVEST

Grocery chain Whole Foods has officially launched its cork recycling program, in conjunction with Cork ReHarvest. The program will run in all 292 Whole Foods stores across Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Western Pulp will turn corks collected west of the Rocky Mountains into recyclable wine shippers, while corks from the Midwest will become cork floor tiles at Yemm & Hart. Corks from the East Coast and the U.K. will go to Jelinek Cork Group, one of the oldest cork manufacturers in North America, for reuse. In order to keep the program's carbon footprint almost nonexistent, the recycled corks are transported in trucks running on pre-existing delivery routes.

Cork is one of the most sustainable materials in the world. Mediterranean oak trees are harvested every nine to 12 years and live an average of 300 years. *(KN)* WA

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In 1964, Masi launched Campofiorin, creating the first Ripasso wine and original Supervenetian.

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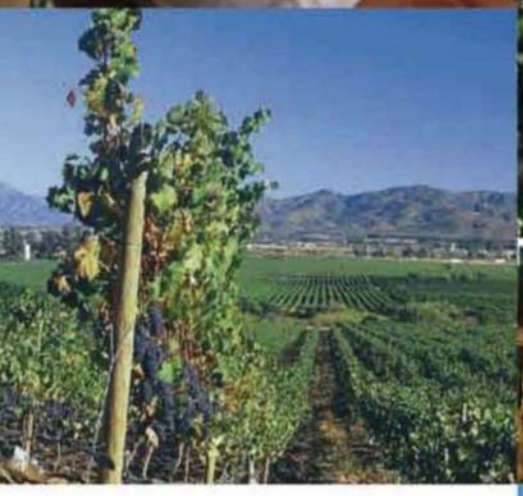

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WINEACCESS

Photo by Jared Sych

BEST BUY

88 PETER LEHMANN 2009 Layers White
Adelaide, Australia
BC $17, AB $16, MB $18

Chalky mineral, pear, peach, floral and apricots come through on this Aussie blend of sémillon, muscadet, gewürztraminer, pinot gris and chardonnay. Medium-bodied and slightly off-dry, some spice emerges beside the stone fruit and mineral notes on the palate that helps take this wine from good to great. *(BMS)*

LOCAL HEROES

89 JACKSON-TRIGGS NIAGARA 2007 Proprietors' Grand Reserve Merlot
Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, Canada
BC $9, AB $11, MB $9, ON $10, NB $11, PEI $9

Look for perfectly ripened black raspberry fruit nicely integrated with fine herbs, chocolate and spice in this stylish merlot. Medium weight, smooth and refined, with light tannin. Wish it had just a bit more flavour concentration to make it truly memorable. Good winemaking here. Best 2011 to 2015. *(DL)*

88 INNISKILLIN OKANAGAN 2007 Discovery Series Petit Verdot
Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada
BC $30 winery

Very peppery, inky, savoury, vanilla, poultry spice, earthy, black cherry aromas. Round, dry, fresh, supple palate, with light tannins. Cassis, black cherry, savoury, vanilla, spicy, floral, coffee, chalky flavours. Good intensity and length. Should improve over the next year or so. *(AG)*

CELLAR DWELLER

90 COUDOULET DE BEAUCASTEL 2007 Rouge
Côtes du Rhône, Rhône Valley, France
BC $35, AB $32, MB $31, ON $30, QC $29, NB $37

This has an open, meaty, chocolate, peppery nose, with black cherry jam, garrigue, floral, raspberry and black liquorice aromas. Fresh, dry, supple palate, with light tannins and excellent finesse. Black raspberry, black plum, liquorice, chocolate, peppery, meaty, dried herb, orange peel flavours. Drinkable now, but will improve with a few years in the bottle. *(ST)*

KILLER VALUE

90 DOÑA PAULA 2008 Estate Malbec
Luján de Cuyo, Northern Region, Mendoza, Argentina
BC $22, AB $17, MB $18, ON $18, QC $17, NL $20

Love the spicy, savoury, vanilla, sage and coffee nose laced with black cherry jam, liquorice and tobacco notes. The palate is round and fresh, with a rich, lightly tannic palate. Lots of chocolate, vanilla, sage, tobacco, dried herbs, black cherry, plum and orange flavours speckled with poultry spice and fresh fruit. Well done. *(AG)*

BARBECUE BUDDY

88 EMILIANA 2007 Novas Winemaker's Selection Chardonnay Viognier Marsanne
Valle de Casablanca, Region de Aconcagua, Chile
BC $25, ON $19

Spicy, mango, peach, butter, ginger, lees, floral and vanilla aromas. Rich, fat, round, slightly sweet entry, with buttery, honeyed, melon, mango, ginger, vanilla and nutty lees flavours. The finish is a bit warm, but with fine fruit intensity. *(ST)*

WEEKEND WARRIOR

88 CHÂTEAU PAUL MAS 2008 Clos des Mûres
Languedoc, France
BC $23, ON $23, QC $19

This wine depends on your mood as it hovers on the edge of internationalism — meaning it lacks local flavour. But if you don't care about that stuff, this is very good, with its deep fruit, coffee notes and finely sanded tannins. Textbook. *(BZ)* WA

Demon Water

Today's high-end rums have come a long way from their Caribbean roots

Slaves on 17th-century Caribbean sugar plantations didn't have easy lives. So it's not surprising they found a way to dull the pain a bit by distilling fermented molasses (a by-product of sugar production) into what they called "kill-devil." The earliest mention, from a 1651 logbook entry, describes it as a "hot, hellish and terrible liquor." It undoubtedly was, but that didn't stop the British Navy from getting blotto on the stuff and hauling it away with them.

By the 18th century, rum was the most popular liquor in the American Colonies, with thousands of distilleries scattered across New England's port towns. Business waned during the 19th century, but, after Prohibition, rum made a comeback in the United States and began to emerge as a popular spirit in Canada, as well.

North America now consumes more of it than any other continent, but only in the past decade has there been a stable of widely available, connoisseur-level rums.

It is high time to salute the preferred hooch of sailors, beach bums and anyone else with devils to kill, with a look at the various types of rum, along with some winners in each category.

WHITE RUM

Often referred to as light or silver rum, this subtle, sweet and clear spirit is the foundation of most rum-based cocktails. White rum is typically aged for a short time in uncharred oak casks or stainless-steel tanks. This liquor comes cheap, but I suggest you spend the extra cash for something such as Havana Club Anejo Blanco ($20-$30) or Lamb's White Rum ($20-$25).

GOLD RUM

This category is also sometimes referred to as amber. The rum spends a few years in charred bourbon barrels, which impart the eponymous gold colour, while blunting the spirit's inherent sweetness. It has a slightly more robust flavour than white rum and is used mostly for making mixed drinks. A good one to try is Bacardi Gold ($20-$25).

SPICED RUM

A category that emerged in the mid-20th century, spiced rums are gold rums that have been infused with various flavours, most commonly cinnamon, vanilla, caramel and a variety of fruits. You can find some real clunkers in this aisle, but you're safe in the hands of Sailor Jerry ($25-$30), the ubiquitous Captain Morgan ($25-$30) or Newfoundland's own Screech ($20-$30).

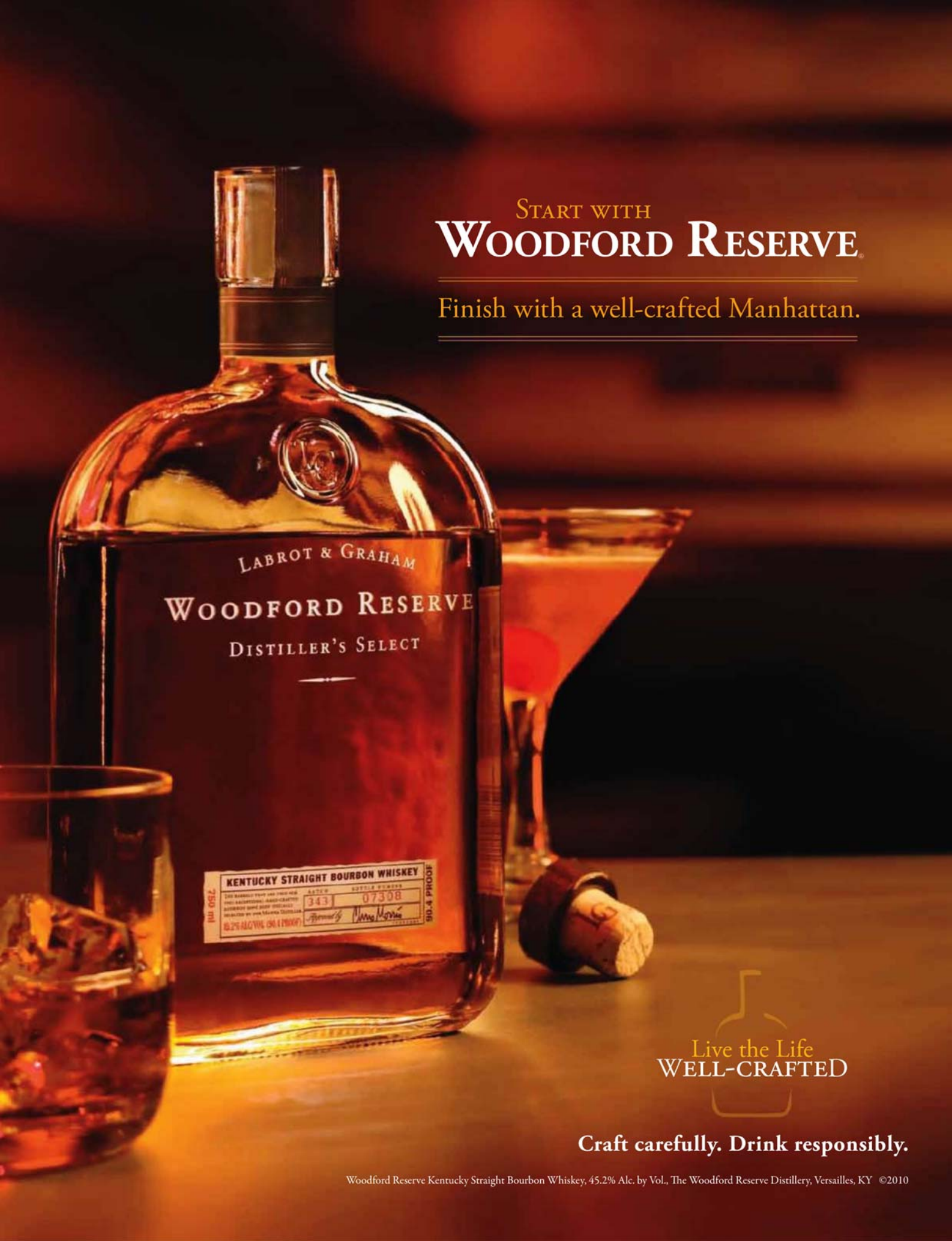
DARK RUM

Dark rum is aged at least three years in heavily charred oak barrels and carries a complex flavour profile that can rival your better whiskeys. The extra aging mellows it out and brings the sweetness back. Though it can be mixed, it's best sipped neat, on the rocks or with a squeeze of lime. For a treat, try the Cruzan Single Barrel ($40-$50).

SUPER-AGED RUM

This relatively new category includes hooch that has been in the barrel even longer than dark rum, usually for five or more years, to bring out more flavour. Though it can be produced from a single spirit, more often than not it is a blend of oldies but goodies. Mount Gay's 1703 Old Cask Selection ($120-$130) is a good place to start. WA

Photo by Jared Sych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NATIONAL

Photo by Steven Elphick

Husband and wife winemaking team Peter Gamble and Ann Sperling

Coast to Coast

Ann Sperling and Peter Gamble have made their mark across Canada's wine scene

Ann Sperling and Peter Gamble are the power tag team of Canadian winemaking. Based in Ontario, they are Canada's premiere husband-and-wife winemakers operating coast to coast: Sperling currently works for wineries in both British Columbia and Ontario, and Gamble splits his time between wineries in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

With more than 25 years of experience each, they only work with clients who share their obsession with terroir-driven quality wines. "What is fundamental to each of our [business] decisions in these last 10 years has been the ability to work with the absolute best of the proprietors," Gamble says. "You need someone who is driven to make great wine." As both consultants and winemakers, the incredibly skilled couple take on projects where they have as much faith in the winery owners as the owners have in them. "That's fundamental to making great wine," Gamble says about their clients. "We have been given carte blanche, cut no corners, [and are told to] push it as hard as you want." For example, when owner David Feldberg bought a producing 55-acre vineyard for Stratus Vineyards in Niagara, he allowed Gamble to uproot and replant 40 acres of it. At the nearby Southbrook Vineyards, where Sperling is director of viticulture and winemaking, owner Bill Redelmeier has spared no expense to develop a winery on the leading edge environmentally, all under Sperling's watchful eye.

Now, in addition to other projects, the couple have themselves as clients — with Sperling Vineyards in B.C. and the launching of their own high-end malbec winery in Argentina's Mendoza region.

Last fall, Sperling Vineyards, the estate winery on the Kelowna vineyard where Sperling grew up, released its first wines — splendid aromatic whites and an old vines foch. She is a member of the Casorso family, which planted Kelowna's first vineyard in 1925. Her father, Bert Sperling, has run the family vineyard since 1960 (two years before she was born). Even with that history, Sperling and Gamble are on a quest to make additional improvements, recently having the soil analyzed by a French expert.

The yet-to-be-named winery in Argentina, based on seven hectares of malbec vines purchased in 2008, is all about further advancing their skills by working with experts there. "It is a culture of advancement [in Argentina] as it relates to winemaking," Gamble says. "The winemaking talent is spectacular." The winery currently has two vintages in barrel and is planning to make the wines available in Canada upon release.

With all their demanding North American projects, it may seem overwhelming for these two to add launching a winery to their list, but Sperling and Gamble believe there is always more to learn, always more great wine to make. "It just gives us the opportunity to do all the things we are doing here with a different grape variety," Gamble says. "It gives us a place to hone our theories in the off-season. And there is the opportunity to do an absolutely spectacular wine." WA

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TASTE, TO GO

This dressed up approach to takeout allows everyone the luxury of spontaneous entertaining

BY **KASEY WILSON**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JARED SYCH**
FOOD STYLING BY **JOY LEE**

"Fine cooking" and "delicious" don't have to mean made from scratch. With a little prep time and imagination, you can use takeout food to create in-home meals that meet the highest standards.

The quality and variety of freshly prepared foods and artisan ingredients have improved dramatically in the last decade. An amalgam of to-go options has been influenced, not only by the restaurant industry, but by local grocers and upscale supermarkets. Restaurant takeout offers an extraordinary palette of international flavours.

Whether buying for one, for the family, or for entertaining friends, takeout is an easy solution for people whose time is too tight to plan, shop and cook. A relaxed party can be arranged in a short time by planning a menu based on re-heatable dishes. While the natural inclination may be to open the containers and let everyone fend for themselves, with just a little extra effort, you can transform any meal from ordinary to extraordinary.

Supermarket Pick-Up

MENU

Gazpacho • Rotisserie Chicken with Gremolata • Roasted New Potato Salad

Supermarkets offer a variety of healthy, freshly made foods. Many upscale markets hire consultants, bring chefs on staff and lean toward organic products. A store-bought tender and crispy rotisserie chicken right off the spit is the ultimate fast food and, with a flavourful garnish, it's special enough for guests. Gremolata is a classic Italian blend of garlic, parsley and citrus peel, traditionally served with osso buco. It adds a quick and lively finish sprinkled over a juicy chicken. This menu can be easily doubled or tripled for a crowd.

HOW TO ORDER Order one chicken for every two guests, depending on the size. The weight of chickens varies from about 1 3/4 to 3 pounds.

TIP: Call ahead to find out when the chickens are coming out of the oven at your favourite shop and time your stop accordingly.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Gazpacho

This chilled soup is an ideal starter for summer suppers. Ladle gazpacho into ice-cold martini glasses or goblets; top with a dollop of sour cream, or thick Greek-style yogurt for a tangy and lower fat alternative. For a cool presentation, add a large shrimp to the rim of glass.

Rotisserie Chicken with Gremolata

Using kitchen shears, cut the chickens in half and arrange them on a warmed platter. Garnish generously with gremolata and serve immediately.

TIP: To reheat chickens, preheat oven to 350°F. Using paper towels, blot the chicken dry and then coat it lightly with olive oil to help crisp the skin. Heat, uncovered, for 25 minutes.

Gremolata

- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- zest of 2 lemons
- zest of 1 orange

Combine all ingredients and serve alongside the chicken.

Roasted New Potato Salad

Most deli counters will have a few varieties of potato salad. If they don't have roasted potato salad, choose the option with a vinaigrette dressing. Put your spin on potato salad by adding 1/2 cup pitted kalamata olives or capers to taste. Serve at room temperature.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

For both casual and more refined dinners.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Before dinner, serve a sparkling wine cocktail. Add 1 teaspoon of crème de cassis to a champagne flute and top with bubble for a Kir Royale; or 1 teaspoon of Cognac to sparkling wine for a French 75.

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFTOVERS

Toss extra chicken into a soup, salad, fajitas, tacos or sandwiches and wraps. Gremolata is delicious mixed with melted butter and served over vegetables.

SUMMER FOOD-TO-GO TIPS

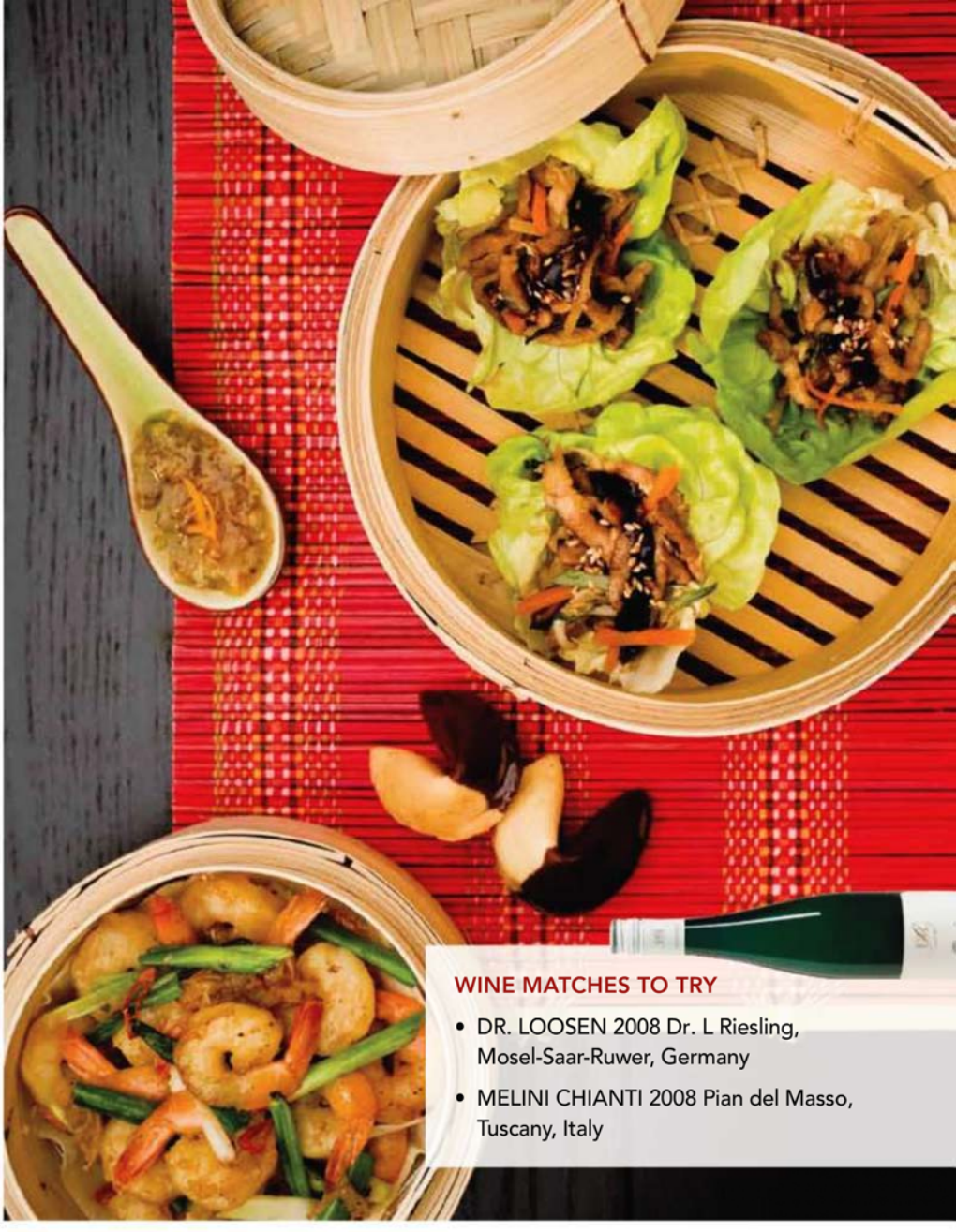
Supermarkets offer a wide range of fresh and healthy foods-to-go, with many high-end food retailers purveying top-shelf items that include organic products in their take-out. Here are some things to keep in mind in the grocery store and at home.

- Taste before you buy. Ask for a sample before you decide on a dish.
- Request the outer slices of pâtés, cheeses or roasted meats be removed.
- Do not serve meats, pâtés, cheeses, salads or vegetable trays ice-cold. Remove from refrigerator about 1/2 hour before serving. Remove cheese two to three hours before serving.
- Have ingredients packed separately for green salads and toss with dressing just before serving.
- Toss potato and chicken salads lightly after they are unpacked.
- Pasta salads absorb dressing, so add extra just before serving.
- Soups can be easily stretched to accommodate an extra guest — add milk, cream, canned tomatoes or chicken or beef broth, depending on the flavour of the soup. To intensify the flavour of mushroom soup, add sautéed wild mushrooms.

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- MIGUEL TORRES 2009 Santa Digna Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé, Valle del Curicó, Chile
- OYSTER BAY 2008 Pinot Noir, Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand

Chinese



MENU

Lettuce Wraps with Pork • Sautéed Prawns with Sweet and Sour Orange Sauce • Fortune Cookies

Chinese cooking cuts across all borders and cultures. Asian restaurants cook ingredients that are in season and maintain high standards by preparing food to order on wok-charring flames, ensuring freshness and traditional dishes that travel well. They are almost always open for business, even on statutory holidays. Many Chinese restaurants are a family business, appealing to consumers in this age of indifference and absenteeism. Best of all, Chinese food is excellent value for your money

HOW TO ORDER Order one dish per person and one for the table. A Chinese menu can be overwhelming with its myriad of options. If you're ordering for a crowd, you should consider 1 1/2 or double orders of your favourite dishes.

TIP: Ask for extra steamed rice, sauces and chopsticks. Choose vegetables and entrées that are not deep-fried. Request sesame seeds — they're complimentary and finish a dish.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Lettuce Wraps with Pork

Order extra hoisin sauce and use your own lettuce. Even the freshest cups may wilt, so it is best to prepare your own.

Take a head of crisp iceberg or butter lettuce, core removed and leaves separate, and tear into approximately 4-inch cups. Just before guests arrive, arrange lettuce cups and hoisin in a bamboo steamer lid and refrigerate.

Tell your guests to layer with hoisin sauce to taste on top of the lettuce and cover with approximately 2 tablespoons of pork (there should be enough room to fold the lettuce over the pork). Garnish with chopped roasted peanuts and a wedge of lime.

Sautéed Prawns

Order sautéed prawns and serve them with the following sauce on the side.

Sweet and Sour Orange Sauce

- 1 cup marmalade
- 4 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 4 Tbsp. rice vinegar

Mix ingredients in a small bowl.

Sweet and sour sauce can be refrigerated up to 2 weeks after preparing.

Fortune Cookies

Dip half of each fortune cookie in melted dark or white chocolate. Let excess chocolate drip back into bowl. Place on wire rack over waxed paper to cool.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

For casual or family dinners with kids — especially when time is short.

HOW TO SERVE IT

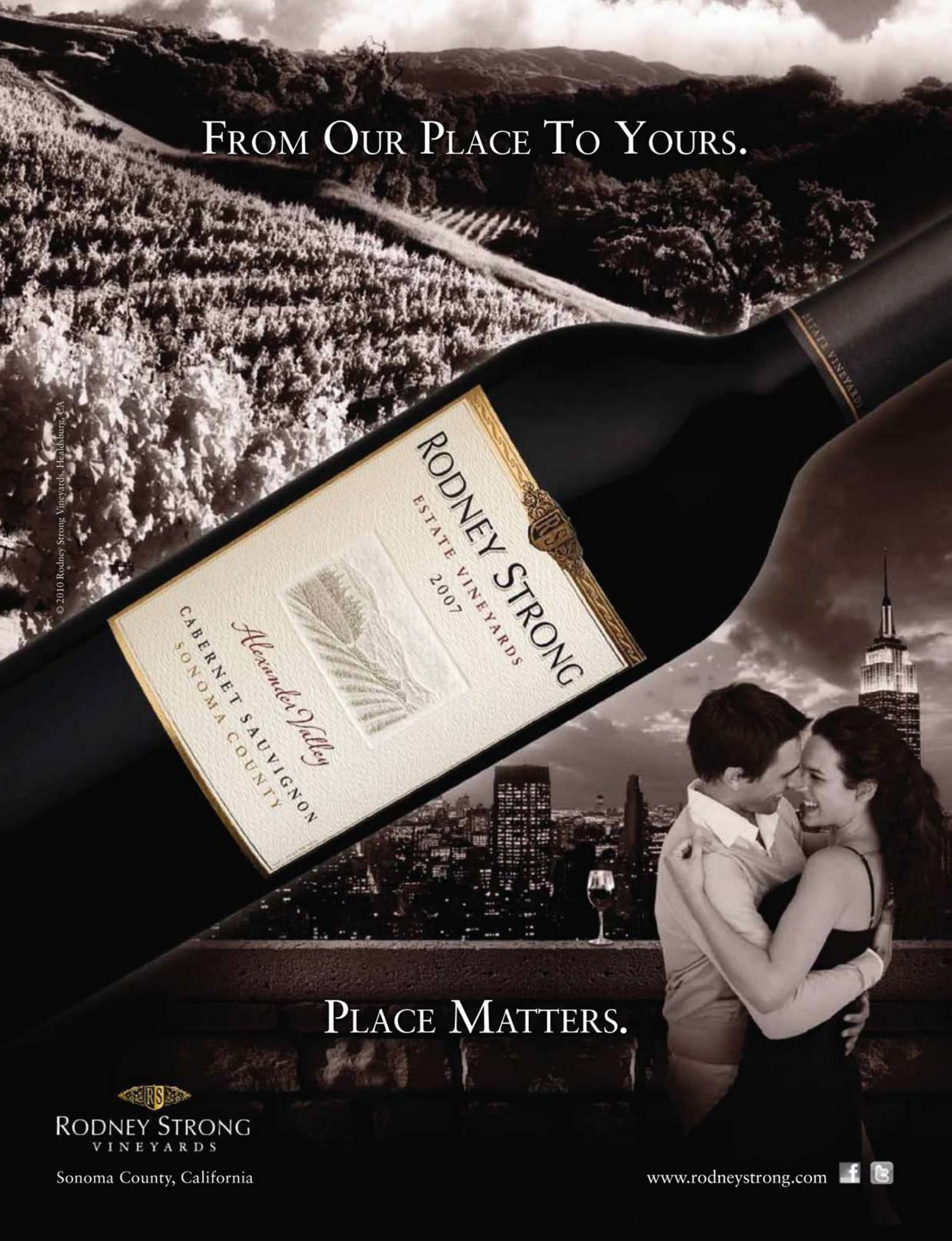
Remove Chinese dishes from foil containers and place food in different sizes of bamboo steamers lined with a plate or foil. (You can use both the base and the lid.) You can also showcase the takeout in woks. For serving utensils, use tongs.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Choose a floral jasmine tea in the summer or a robust Iron Buddha in the winter.

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- DR. LOOSEN 2008 Dr. L Riesling, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Germany
- MELINI CHIANTI 2008 Pian del Masso, Tuscany, Italy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Thai

MENU

Chicken Satays with Spicy Peanut Sauce • Papaya Salad • Shrimp Pad Thai

The bold flavours of Thai street cooking — sweet, salty, spicy and sour — can all be found at your favourite Thai restaurant. Many of the key ingredients are common ones, such as garlic, basil, dried chilies, cilantro and soy sauce. But when they're combined with the exotic — lemongrass, fish sauce (nam pla) and coconut milk — it results in one of Asian's most vibrant cuisines.

Thai restaurants offer a large variety of takeout options that travel well: soups; red, green or yellow curries; steamed or fried entrees; rice noodles; salads; and always an abundance of rice. In Thailand, all the dishes are served at the same time, and there is always enough food to accommodate unexpected guests.

HOW TO ORDER An ample supply of steamed jasmine rice is always the centrepiece of a Thai meal, so order extra servings. Add a curry to this menu and serve a mango sorbet for dessert.

TIP: Knives are used rarely, and chopsticks are only used when noodles are included. Thais eat with a fork and a dessert-sized spoon. The fork (in your right hand) pushes food onto the spoon, which then goes into your mouth. (The fork never does.)

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Chicken Satays with Spicy Peanut Sauce

Serve lightly charred skewers of chicken with your homemade spicy peanut sauce.

Spicy Peanut Sauce

- 1/2 cup natural-style creamy peanut butter
- 2 Tbsp. light brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 Tbsp. Thai fish sauce (nam pla)
- 1 tsp. chili-garlic sauce
- 1/2 cup water

In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together all the ingredients until smooth.

Refrigerate for up to 2 days before serving.

Papaya Salad (Som Tum Thai)

For each four servings, add 1/2 pound of thinly sliced rare beef to the salad, toss gently and serve.

Shrimp Pad Thai

Sprinkle pad Thai with 2 tablespoons of chopped dry-roasted salted peanuts and serve with lime wedges.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

For a weekend dinner with a mix of teens and adults — satays please everyone.

HOW TO SERVE IT

Use bright, colourful runners, bamboo placemats and exotic flowers in individual glass vases. Place food in earthenware, wooden or copper serving pieces.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Singha beer or Thai iced tea.

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- ST. HALLETT 2008 Poacher's Sémillon Sauvignon Blanc, Barossa Valley, South Australia
- THIRTY BENCH 2008 Riesling, Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, Ca nada

Indian

MENU

Spicy Vegetable Samosas and Vij's Mint Mango Chutney • Lamb Biryani • Raita

Ancient customs, traditions and varied religions contribute to India having one of the world's most intricate and labour-intensive cuisines. Most Indian restaurant menus mix Northern and Southern elements, giving a wider choice to diners.

From the North come elaborate layered-rice dishes, called biryani, red-hued tandoori specialties and flatbreads cooked in a tandoor — an urn-shaped oven that can reach 1,000°F. The South is reflected by spicier, often steamed foods, plus slow-simmered curries and rice. Chutneys are the Indian version of salsas and are usually prepared fresh daily.

HOW TO ORDER Choose an appetizer, curry, rice, raita, vegetable, pappadums, naan, pickles and a variety of chutneys. Since curries are prepared mild, medium or hot; be specific with your order. Serve a mango lassi for dessert.

TIP: Ask for extra breads, chutney and pickles. You can prepare rice at home or add steamed vegetables to a curry sauce.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Spicy Vegetable Samosas and Vij's Mint Mango Chutney

Order vegetable samosas (these usually come with potatoes and peas) and reheat in a 200°F oven for up to an hour before serving along with this homemade chutney. This recipe comes from *Vij's Elegant & Inspired Indian Cuisine* by Vikram Vij and Meeru Dhalwala (Douglas & McIntyre, $40).

Vij's Mint Mango Chutney

- 6 oz. fresh mint leaves with stems
- 1/2 cup cilantro with stems
- 1 1/4 cups mango pulp (available at Indian markets)
- 1/3 cup coconut milk
- 2 Tbsp. white vinegar
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp. turmeric
- 2 jalapeño peppers, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh garlic

Wash mint and discard stems. Wash cilantro, but do not discard anything — use all of the cilantro, including stems. In a food processor, combine mint, cilantro, mango pulp, coconut milk, vinegar, salt, cumin, turmeric, jalapeño and garlic. Process until smooth. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate at least 1 hour.

Makes 6 to 8 servings

Lamb Biryani

Sprinkle with thinly sliced fried onions, toasted almonds and raisins that have been plumped in hot water.

Raita

To each 2 cups of raita, add 1 tomato — peeled, cored, seeded and chopped — 2 tablespoons of chopped red onion and 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

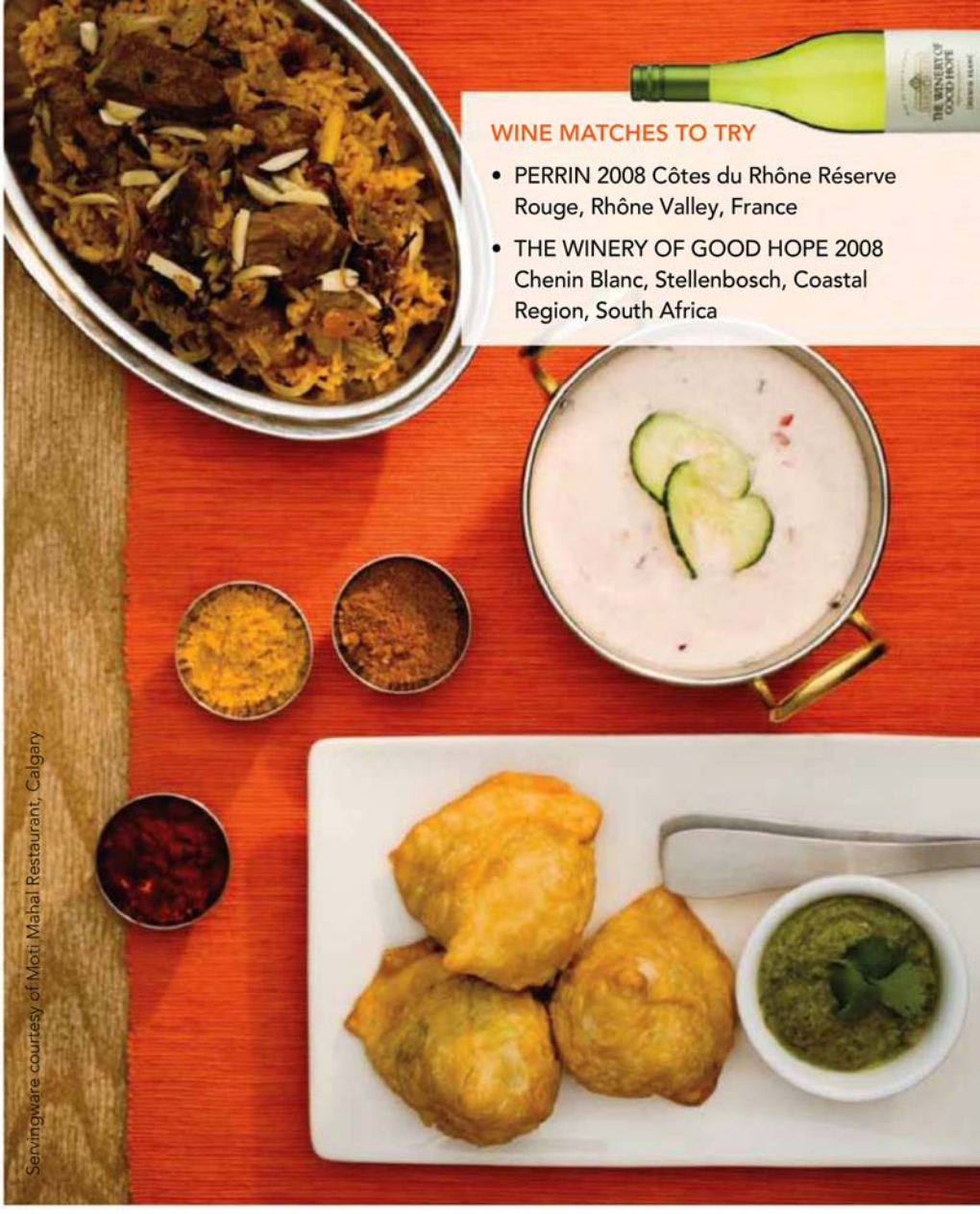
For casual gatherings, large or small.

HOW TO SERVE IT

Set the table using colourful napkins as placemats, letting them hang slightly over the edge. Serve dishes in copper pots or bowls.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Kingfisher beer or Chai tea.



Servingware courtesy of Moti Mahal Restaurant, Calgary

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- PERRIN 2008 Côtes du Rhône Réserve Rouge, Rhône Valley, France
- THE WINERY OF GOOD HOPE 2008 Chenin Blanc, Stellenbosch, Coastal Region, South Africa

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Mexican

MENU

Tortilla Chips • *Enchiladas* • *Refried Beans* • *Sorbet in Citrus Shells*

The flavours of Mexico offer so many takeaway options, with classic soups like sopa de tortilla or black bean, tamales and saucy or spicy specialties like enchiladas and chicken mole. The seasoned rice, refried beans and salsas that accompany entrées are also very manageable side dishes. And don't forget fresh salsa with its confetti of colour. For refreshing, make-ahead, individual desserts, serve sorbet or gelato in hollowed-out citrus fruit. Download some mariachi music and you have an instant party.

HOW TO ORDER For saucy specialties like enchiladas, order 2 per person, or, for chicken in mole sauce, order 1 chicken breast per diner. Ask for extra sauce.

TIP: Tortilla chips are usually homemade in Mexican establishments and are not as salty as commercial varieties, so order extra. Order sides of salsas — mild, medium or hot — for dipping and to serve with the entrées. Avoid fried items, like hard-shell tacos, taquitos, chile rellenos and chimichangas, as fried foods are difficult to reheat.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Tortilla Chips

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread tortilla chips in a large, shallow baking pan and bake in the middle of the oven until warm, about 5 minutes.

Serve the tortilla chips alongside bowls of your favourite salsas, guacamole and sour cream.

Enchiladas

Reheat enchilaladas in a colourful baking dish, top with extra sauce and sprinkle with freshly grated mozzarella cheese.

Refried Beans

Sauté spicy Mexican chorizo and add to refried beans.

Sorbet or Gelato in Citrus Shells

Cut your choice of lemons, limes, oranges or blood oranges in half and scoop out the pulp. (You can cut thin slices off the bottom so the fruit will sit flat.) Fill the citrus shells with lemon, lime, orange or tropical sorbets or gelatos. For a decadent alternative, fill blood oranges with chocolate gelato. Cover well and freeze.

Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

When entertaining on the fly.

HOW TO SERVE IT

Get out your rustic enamelware for enchiladas, plates for main dishes and multi-coloured bowls for everything else.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Mexican beer tricked out with hot sauce, lime juice and Worcestershire.

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- YALUMBA 2009 Y Series Viognier, Barossa Valley, South Australia
- CASTILLO DE MONSÉRAN 2008 Garnacha, Cariñena, Aragon, Spain

Barbecue Pulled Pork

MENU

Pulled Pork Nachos, Tacos and Pizza • Coleslaw • Potato Salad • Baked Beans

Southern barbecue, with its tender, smoky pulled pork, barbecue sauce, coleslaw and potato salad, is perfect takeout food. It's casual, hearty fare that travels well, can be easily reheated and offers versatility. There's no better way for the sports fan to throw a culinary long bomb and score at a Grey Cup or Super Bowl party. Instead of ordering pulled pork sandwiches to go, order the ingredients separately — you can then offer guests not only pulled pork sandwiches, but nachos, tacos and even a pulled pork pizza.

HOW TO ORDER For every 4 guests, order about 1 1/2 lbs. of pulled pork, 1 cup of barbecue sauce and 4 sides of coleslaw, potato salad and baked beans.

TIP: Ask to have pulled pork wrapped tightly in aluminum foil. Keep warm in a 200°F oven.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Pulled Pork Tacos

For these you will need corn tortillas, pulled pork, coleslaw, fresh cilantro sprigs and store-bought salsa. Twenty to 30 minutes before serving, heat oven to 350°F. Lay a damp paper towel on a 24-by-18-inch piece of heavy-duty foil. Warm tortillas in groups of 8; set 2 stacks of 4 tortillas each side by side on the paper towel. Cover with another damp paper towel and seal foil completely. Bake until steamy. Pull tortillas from oven as needed and let guests fill them with pulled pork, coleslaw, cilantro sprigs and salsa. For extra flavour, add guacamole, sour cream and fresh lime wedges.

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- LONGUE-DOG 2008 Grenache Syrah, Languedoc, France
- LOUIS BERNARD 2008 Côtes du Rhône Villages, Rhône Valley, France

Memphis Blues Pulled Pork Nachos

This recipes comes from *Memphis Blues Barbeque House* by George Siu and Park Heffelfinger (Whitecap, $30).

- 329 g corn chips
- 2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese or mozzarella
- 1 lb. pulled pork, warmed
- 3/4 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro and/or green onions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Arrange chips in a circle on a baking pan. Sprinkle with cheese and bake until cheese melts, about 7 minutes. Slide chips onto a plate and cover with the pulled pork. Smother with barbecue sauce and sprinkle with chopped tomatoes, cilantro and green onions.

Makes 2 servings.

Pulled Pork Pizza

Order a half-baked 14-inch thin crust pizza from your favourite pizzeria and place on a baking pan. Spread 1 cup of barbecue sauce evenly over the crust, leaving about 3/4-inch dough uncovered around the edge and add 2 cups of pulled pork on top of sauce. Top with thinly sliced onions and chopped red bell peppers. Sprinkle 2 cups of grated mozzarella cheese evenly over the top. Bake in a preheated 475°F oven for about 8 to 10 minutes.

Cut into wedges and serve.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

For any casual event — Grey Cup or Stanley Cup party, pre-or-post-hockey games or a family reunion.

HOW TO VARY IT

Instead of pulled pork, you can make all of these dishes with pulled chicken, using store-bought rotisserie chicken and your favourite barbecue sauce.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Root beer, iced tea and lemonade.

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Greek

MENU

Sautéed Shrimp and Ouzo • Greek Salad with Garlicky Pita Toasts • Lamb Souvlaki with Rice, Roasted Potatoes and Tzatziki

The Greek philosophy of food is uncomplicated: make it fresh and fragrant and serve generous portions with gusto. Throughout Greece, lamb souvlaki, grilled and threaded on skewers, is as common as burgers are in North America. Ouzo, used to infuse the shrimp appetizer, is a fiery anise-flavoured liqueur made from crushed grape skins and pungent aromatics. It's fun to sip with appetizers as an aperitif, neat, or with a splash of water.

Greek food represents more than just plates of food; it's about friends and conversations and simple, flavourful cooking.

HOW TO ORDER Three entrées with sides easily feed 4 diners. Extra skewers of meat are also available at reasonable prices for carnivores. Ask for extra pita bread and sides of tzatziki.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Sautéed Shrimp and Ouzo

- 1/2 cup ouzo
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 1/2 lbs. large shrimp (13 to 15 per pound), peeled and deveined, leaving tails intact
- 4 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Combine ouzo, lemon juice and cayenne in a large baking dish. Add shrimp and gently toss. Cover and refrigerate for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Pat the shrimp dry with paper towels. In a large skillet, heat 2 Tbsp. olive oil over medium heat. Add half the shrimp and cook over high heat until golden and just cooked, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and transfer to a warmed platter. Repeat with remaining oil and shrimp. Serve warm.

Makes 6 servings.

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- BOLLINI 2008 Pinot Grigio, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy
- TRIVENTO 2007 Amado Sur Malbec Bonarda Syrah, Mendoza, Argentina

Greek Salad

Add extra oil to the salad and squeeze 1/2 lemon over top before tossing. Top with cubes of feta cheese and serve with Garlicky Pita Toasts.

Garlicky Pita Toasts

- 2 8-inch pocketless pita breads
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive, plus extra for brushing
- 1 large garlic clove, cut in half

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brush pita breads on both sides with olive oil and bake on the oven rack until golden, about 8 minutes. Rub the toasts on both sides with the garlic and let cool.

Cut each pita into 6 wedges and serve with Greek salad.

Makes 12 pieces.

Lamb Souvlaki, Rice, Roasted Potatoes, Tzatziki

Rethread lamb souvlaki onto wooden skewers and serve on a platter with limes and lemons. Add 1 cup green peas to the rice. Squeeze some lemon over tzatziki.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

For a casual Saturday night supper.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Sip ouzo with the appetizer.

WHAT TO DO WITH LEFTOVERS

Reheat the lamb, rice and potatoes, or serve at room temperature and toss into salad for lunch the next day.

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Pizza

MENU

Barbecued Pizzas • Grilled Hearts of Romaine with Caesar Dressing • Frozen Ice Cream Pie

A barbecued pizza party for friends and family creates its own fun, with the preparation of the meal outdoors becoming a part of the experience. Pizza, ordered half-baked, and then grilled on the barbecue, is delicious and a great alternative when it's too hot to turn on the oven. The intense heat of a barbecue produces a crisp, lightly smoked crust. With a little imagination, and some unusual, yet simple toppings, the humble pizza will satisfy even the most critical palate.

HOW TO ORDER Order small or medium thin-crusted pizzas partially baked and uncut from your favourite pizzeria. Tell them to go easy on the cheese and order no toppings.

TIP: Find out who makes the tastiest pizza crust in your area, and don't forget to check out Italian restaurants. Many have wood-fired ovens and make their own pizza dough in small batches.

HOW TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Barbecued Pizzas

Remove half-baked pizzas from packaging and place on baking sheets. (If you refrigerate pizzas, bring to room temperature before grilling.)

Start adding toppings, but don't load up the pizza. Use restraint and keep the toppings simple, with strong cheeses and lots of herbs or spices. Cover crusts with topping choice and slide from baking sheet onto the grill.

Cover barbecue with lid and cook until topping is hot and pizza bottom is crisp, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from barbecue.

To finish pizza, scatter with herbs. Cut into wedges and serve.

Grilled Hearts of Romaine with Caesar Dressing

- 8 hearts of romaine, halved lengthwise
- 8 slices of crusty peasant bread
- Olive oil
- 1 cup of your favourite creamy Caesar dressing
- Freshly shaved Parmesan cheese, preferably Parmigiano-Reggiano

Preheat a gas grill to moderately high heat. Lightly brush the hearts of romaine with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill, turning once or twice, until lightly charred, but still crisp, about 3 minutes. Lightly brush the bread with olive oil. Grill, turning once, until toasted — about 2 minutes. Spread half of the Caesar dressing on a platter. Arrange the grilled hearts of romaine on top and brush with the remaining dressing. Garnish with Parmesan cheese and serve the grilled bread alongside.

Makes 8 servings.

Frozen Ice Cream Pie

Purchase a frozen ice cream pie and serve with warm chocolate and caramel sauces, topped with toasted walnuts or pecans, roughly chopped.

WHEN TO SERVE IT

For a casual party, especially for young people, or as an appetizer.

HOW TO SERVE IT

Transfer pizzas to cutting boards, sprinkle with fresh herbs and bring to the picnic table. Cut with a sharp knife or kitchen shears and serve.

WHAT TO SERVE WITH IT

Iced tea and lemonade.

SUGGESTED TOPPINGS:

Cheeses: Mozzarella, parmesan, Monterey Jack, gorgonzola, gruyère, fontina, feta, goat cheese

Vegetables: Mushrooms (sliced and lightly sautéed), tomatoes (diced and drained), red onions (lightly sautéed), asparagus spears (grilled and cut into 1-inch lengths)

Canned products: Roasted peppers, pesto, artichokes (drained and tossed with olive oil), clams (chopped and drained)

Meats: Bacon (1/2-inch-wide pieces cooked until crisp), spicy Italian sausage (casing removed and browned)

Herbs and spices: Basil, chives, red pepper flakes, flat-leaf parsley

WINE MATCHES TO TRY

- PASCUAL TOSO 2008 Malbec, Maipú, Northern Region, Mendoza, Argentina
- TORMARESCA 2007 Paiara Negroamaro-Cabernet Sauvignon, Apulia, Italy

Pairing Guidelines

Picking a wine to enjoy alongside takeout can be daunting when you don't know the specific ingredients used and are faced with flavourful, often complicated dishes. The key is to look at the main feature of the dish: is it served in a strong tomato-based sauce? Is it a dish with a lot of spice? Don't try to pair a wine with every element of a dish, but rather find something that complements it's most outstanding flavour features. Following these guidelines will get the guesswork out of wine pairing with takeout. *(Anthony Gismondi and Stuart Tobe)*

SUPERMARKET PICK-UP Chicken and potato salad scream light and fresh, maybe even alfresco, dining. Rosé is the knockout punch pairing here, but red wine-lovers can reach for an equally pleasing pinot noir. Both offer good fruit and texture, without being heavy and cloying.

MEXICAN Enchiladas often come with a tomato-based sauce that can be spicy, and sometimes a bit tart. The food is not particularly heavy in fat, but it is robust and calls for something fresh, a bit fruity, a bit spicy and with some richness. Viognier works well, as do most garnacha labels.

CHINESE The wine choices are varied to accompany somewhat sweet-tinged, lightly salted dishes. A riesling provides the best overall balance of fruit and juicy acidity, with a touch of sweetness. For a surprise pairing, try a young sangiovese with the heavier dishes.

BARBECUE PULLED PORK Pork and the spices used create a sweet, spicy, savoury flavour profile that requires a similar wine style, but with good acidity to prevent the fat content from being heavy. Southern Rhône reds are the match.

THAI Thai is a spicy, rich, flavourful cuisine, often with fish sauce nuances, that requires wine with some fatness and intensity, without being heavy. Fruity blends of sauvignon blanc and sémillon, or a dry riesling from Australia or Ontario's Niagara Peninsula, would be safe bets.

GREEK The savoury, fresh flavours in lamb lend themselves to fruity reds, like syrah or malbec. For a shellfish wine to complement the ouzo taste and prawns, a bright, fruity Northern Italian white will do.

INDIAN Rich, savoury and spicy curry gravy and the fruitiness in biryani can be harmonized and balanced by spicy, fruity-style whites. Choices here range from gewürztraminer, ehrenfelser, chenin blanc, viognier and albariño. Alternatively, a red with good fruit and acidity, like a young Côtes du Rhône or barbera, will tame the lamb.

PIZZA Tomato sauce gives acidity and the cheeses give rich texture and a bit of fat; add a bit of meat, herbs and smoke and you need a more rustic wine, with light tannins, good acidity and bright fruit. Think Argentine malbec and Southern Italian reds.

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Your In-House Wine List

Make takeout night-pairing easy by keeping some of these bottles on hand

BY ANTHONY GISMONDI

SPARKLING WINE

Segura Viudas N/V Brut Reserva Cava, Penedès, Catalunya, Spain $15-$17

ROSÉ

La Vieille Ferme 2007 Côtes du Ventoux Rosé, Rhône Valley, France $11-$13

FRESH, PALATE-CLEANSING WHITES

Oyster Bay 2008 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand $15-$20
Santa Carolina 2009 Reserva Sauvignon Blanc, Valle de Leyda, Chile $10-$15
Santa Rita 2009 120 Sauvignon Blanc, Valle del Lontué, Chile $10-$15
Veramonte 2006 Reserva Sauvignon Blanc, Valle de Casablanca, Chile $10-$15
Wente 2008 Morning Fog Chardonnay, Livermore, San Francisco Bay, California $15-$22

FRUITY, AROMATIC, CAREFREE WHITES

Fazi Battaglia 2007 Titulus Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico, Marche, Italy $14-$19
Penfolds 2008 Thomas Hyland Riesling, South Australia $18-$20
Torres 2007 Vina Esmeralda, Catalunya, Spain $12-$16
Yalumba 2008 Y Series Viognier, Barossa Valley, South Australia $15-$20

LIGHT, FRESH AND INVITING REDS

Cono Sur 2008 Pinot Noir, Valle del Rapel, Region del Valle Central, Chile $10-$15
Carmen 2007 Carmenère, Region del Valle Central, Chile $10-$15
Antinori 2007 Santa Cristina Sangiovese, Tuscany, Italy $12-$17

RICH, MOUTHFILLING AND WARM REDS

Alamos 2008 Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina $13-$17
De Bortoli 2007 dB Petite Sirah, South Eastern Australia $10-$15
Errazuriz 2007 Max Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon, Valle de Aconcagua, Chile $15-$20
Finca Flichman 2008 Misterio Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina $10-$15
Masi 2006 Campofiorin, Verona, Veneto, Italy $17-$22
Porcupine Ridge 2008 Syrah, Coastal Region, South Africa $15-$19
Pampas del Sur 2008 Reserve Malbec, Mendoza, Argentina $11-$15

MYSTERIOUS RED BLENDS

Goats do Roam 2005 Red, South Africa $13-$17
Heartland 2007 Stickleback Red, South Australia $13-$17
La Vieille Ferme 2008 Côtes du Ventoux Rouge, Rhône Valley, France $10-$15
Ogier 2007 Côtes du Rhône Heritages, Rhône Valley, France $14-$19 WA

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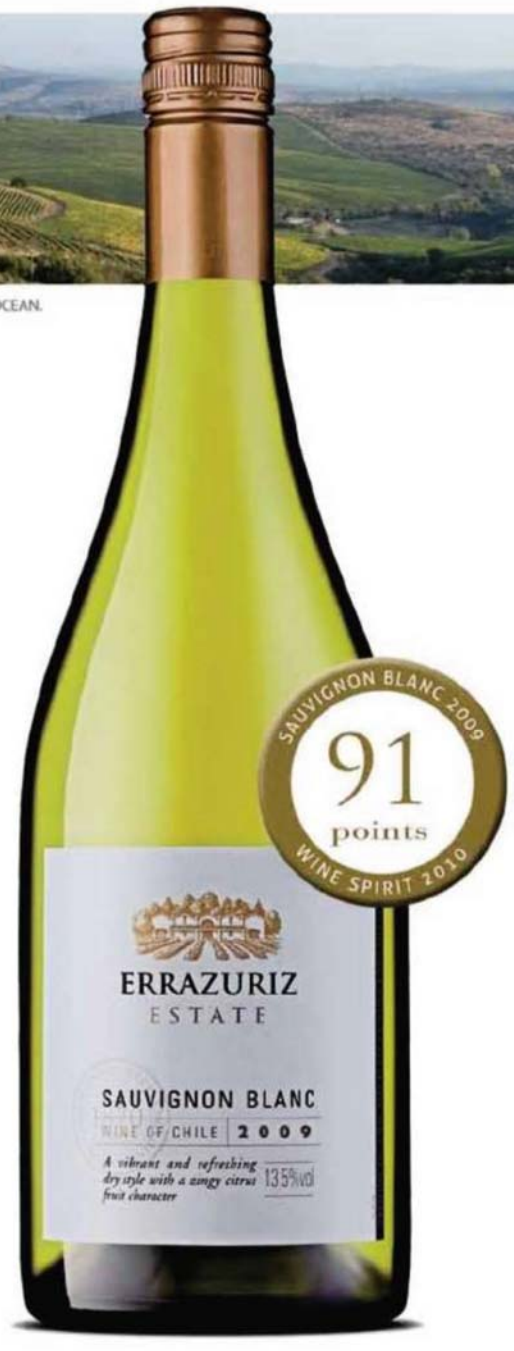

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MAY WE SEE THE WINE LIST, PLEASE?

When the ambiance and the food are right, it is up to the wine list to make your evening perfect. Our writers share some of the country's best, with an eye to how they support the style and menu of the restaurant.

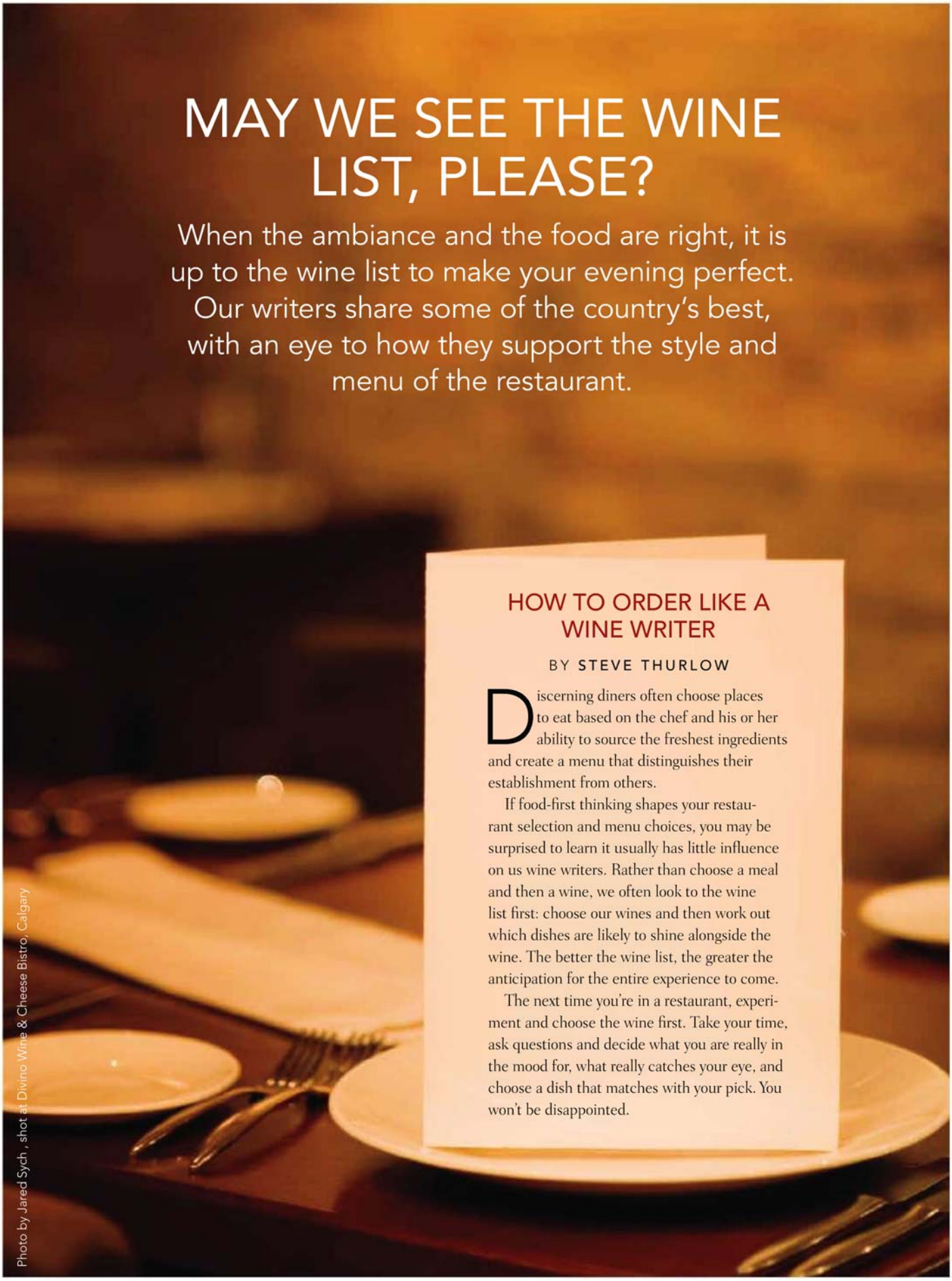

Photo by Jared Sych , shot at Divino Wine & Cheese Bistro, Calgary

HOW TO ORDER LIKE A WINE WRITER

BY STEVE THURLOW

Discerning diners often choose places to eat based on the chef and his or her ability to source the freshest ingredients and create a menu that distinguishes their establishment from others.

If food-first thinking shapes your restaurant selection and menu choices, you may be surprised to learn it usually has little influence on us wine writers. Rather than choose a meal and then a wine, we often look to the wine list first: choose our wines and then work out which dishes are likely to shine alongside the wine. The better the wine list, the greater the anticipation for the entire experience to come.

The next time you're in a restaurant, experiment and choose the wine first. Take your time, ask questions and decide what you are really in the mood for, what really catches your eye, and choose a dish that matches with your pick. You won't be disappointed.

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SALT TASTING ROOM

Not a huge list, but boy, is it well thought out, with great variety. I love the huge selection of sherries and dessert wines, which, unlike most restaurants, is as diverse as the table wine section. A fun, but thoughtful mix of Old World and New World with almost everything — other than a few higher end wines — by the glass or 2-oz. taster. There should be a Salt in every city. *(Gurvinder Bhatia)*

45 Blood Alley, Vancouver, BC, 604-633-1912, salttastingroom.com

VIJ'S

This brilliantly chosen, tiny list offers great value with fixed prices ($9 per glass and $36 per bottle). The selections fit the food like a glove and the unfussy extensive reserve list bursts with great rieslings, grüners and juicy reds of interest. *(DJ Kearney)*

1480 W. 11th Ave., Vancouver, BC, 604-736-6664, vijs.ca

BLUE WATER CAFE AND RAW BAR

This plentiful list can seem overwhelming, but it is hard to top in terms of depth and breadth for pairing with seafood in general and Pacific Northwest seafood in particular. All of the selections are served by the crack wine team. Sipping fizz at the Raw Bar is a pleasant pastime in this town. *(DK)*

1095 Hamilton St., Vancouver, BC, 604-688-8078, bluewatercafe.net

UVA WINE BAR

The captivating list, the food and the ambience are what UVA is all about. Order one of the many gems, like the Palmina Santa Ynez Nebbiolo, for a thrill. *(DK)*

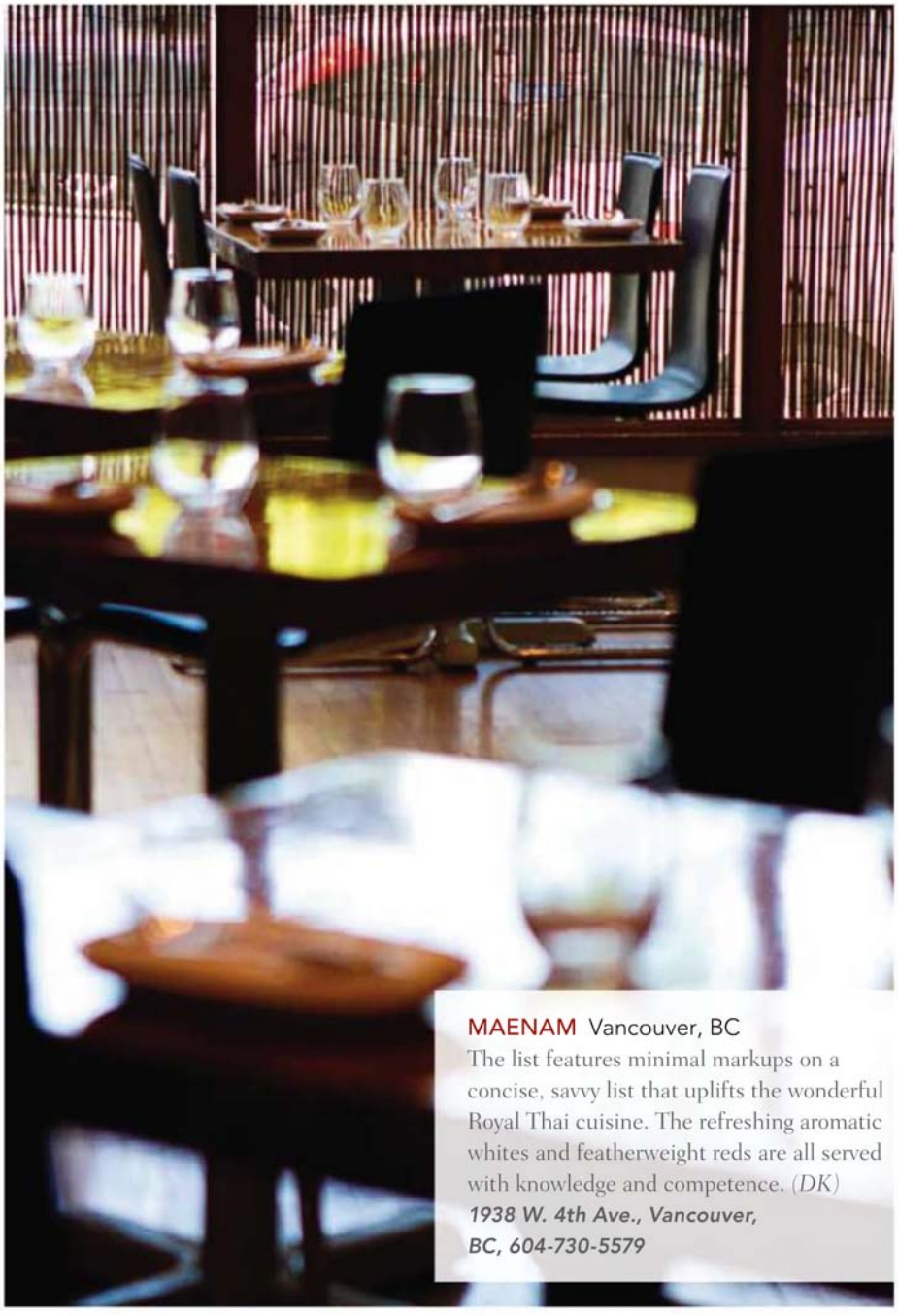
900 Seymour St., Vancouver, BC, 604-632-9560, uvawinebar.ca

WHITE ROCK

PEARL ON THE ROCK

Rock solid cuisine, focusing on local, coastal and specialty charcuterie, is thoughtfully paired to a beautifully chosen wine list that will thrill the novice or collector wine lover, alike. Well worth the trip out of town. *(DK)*

14955 Marine Dr., White Rock, BC, 604-542-1064, pearlrestaurant.ca



MAENAM Vancouver, BC

The list features minimal markups on a concise, savvy list that uplifts the wonderful Royal Thai cuisine. The refreshing aromatic whites and featherweight reds are all served with knowledge and competence. *(DK)*

1938 W. 4th Ave., Vancouver, BC, 604-730-5579

NELSON

ALL SEASONS CAFÉ

If you are driving to Calgary, Jasper or beyond, don't miss the charming and comfy All Seasons Café in the cultured, if laid-back, town of Nelson for a great British Columbia wine selection, strong Pacific Northwest choices and interesting international picks. Markups are more than fair, and wine is served with care and no pretension whatsoever. *(DK)*

620 Herridge Ln., Nelson, BC, 250-352-0101, allseasonscafe.com

ALBERTA

CALGARY

DIVINO WINE & CHEESE BISTRO

A contemporary, eclectic, postmodern list etched by sommelier/buyer Brad Royale. The list includes all the right classics alongside insider's gems. Each style is served in its prescribed crystal stem with flair and poetry. It's a place where if the sommelier says, "trust me," you can. *(John Szabo)*

113 8th Ave. SW (Stephen Avenue Mall), Calgary, AB, 403-410-5555, crmr.com/divino

TEATRO
A classic, old school, 800-plus label list with both breadth and depth in a fine-dining atmosphere. Primarily focused on French and Italian wines, the wine list also features several high-end verticals and lots of older vintages. A great list of aged wine that is ready to drink, no matter your budget. *(Tom Firth)*
200 8th Ave. SE, Calgary, AB, 403-290-1012, teatro-rest.com

RIVER CAFÉ
A large 500-plus international bottle list with a serious selection of Canadian wines. The combination of current and back vintages ensures finding a wine for a night out or special occasion is easy to do. The talented and knowledgeable wine staff is willing to lend a hand and help you find the perfect wine. *(TF)*
200 Barclay Parade SW, Calgary, AB, 403-261-7670, river-café.com

BRAVA BISTRO
A great list that, despite its brevity, is packed with excellent wines. With a little bit of everything in terms of style, the list is dominated by international wines selling for less than $60 — perfect for an evening meal or a long lunch. *(TF)*
723 17th Ave. SW, Calgary, AB, 403-228-1854, bravabistro.com

EDMONTON

WILDFLOWER GRILL
A really well-balanced list concentrating on quality, small producers, with an emphasis on Canadian and Californian wines. The list also features a nice selection of bubbles, interesting Aussies and cool picks from Bandol, Marche, Rias Baixas, Wachau, Sicily and Priorat. *(GB)*
10009 107th St. NW, Edmonton, AB, 780-990-1938, wildfloweredmonton.com

BISTECCA ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR
The wine list is Italian-focussed, with great, off-the-beaten-track choices. There is also a nice selection of Canadian and a smattering from the rest of the world. Any wine list with Capezzana Carmignano by the glass is a thumbs-up in my books. A bonus is the well-selected Manager's Selections for less than $49. *(GB)*
2345 111th St. NW, Edmonton, AB, 780-439-7335, sorrentinos.com/bistecca.html

SABOR DIVINO
The Sabor Divino list is impressively large, with a proud showing of Portuguese wines along with popular regions, both New and Old World. The food is authentically European and well paired with the wine options. There is something here for all tastes and all budgets, including by-the-glass and small formats. *(TF)*
109 10220 103 St. NW, Edmonton, AB, 780-757-1114, sabordivino.ca

SKY 360 Calgary, AB
The first thing you notice when you open this clean and concise list is the easy-to-understand way the variety of wines are arranged. Plenty of favourites from around the globe dot the list, along with a respectable selection of Canadian wines. Reasonable prices and a decent cross-section of by-the-glass options help make for a memorable night at the top of the Calgary Tower, for wine novices and more discerning palates alike. *(TF)*
101 – 9 Ave. SW, Calgary, AB, 403-532-7966, sky360.ca

SASKATCHEWAN

SASKATOON

CALORIES BAKERY & RESTAURANT
When your menu changes regularly/seasonally, your wine list needs to either change with it, or offer wines that are able to match diverse flavours. Calories does the latter, and features many exclusive wines — some sourced independently from out-of-province. If you enjoyed the wine with your meal, Calories can also sell you a bottle afterwards (and for less than wine list price). *(Ben MacPhee-Sigurdson)*
721 Broadway Ave., Saskatoon, SK, 306-665-7991, caloriesrestaurants.com

REGINA

THE WILLOW ON WASCANA
Located across Wascana Lake from the Saskatchewan Legislative building, The Willow on Wascana offers fine dining using locally sourced ingredients. The wine list is concise, offering brief-but-informative descriptions of each of the two dozen or so selections, many of which are available by the glass. The restaurant also offers a wine club membership run by its sommelier, David Burke. *(BMS)*
3000 Wascana Dr., Regina, SK, 306-585-3663, willowonwascana.ca

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BISTRO 7 1/4

South Osborne's Bistro 7 1/4 is among the best of the area's many cozy-yet-happening eateries. Its French-inspired cuisine, with an emphasis on local ingredients, works well with the concise, well-chosen and fun wine list. Any doubts about pairing wine and food can be handily put to rest by the knowledgeable staff. *(BMS)*

725 Osborne St., Winnipeg, MB, 204-777-2525, alexanderskitchen.com

PROVENCE BISTRO

Owner/sommelier Shawn Brandson has done a stellar job of compiling a wine list that matches the beauty of both Provence Bistro's fare and the surrounding golf course. The food is distinctly French and the wine list favours France, Italy and Australia. It's the city's first restaurant to offer wine lockers to patrons. *(BMS)*

620 Niakawa Rd., Winnipeg, MB, 204-254-3500, provencebistro.com

TERRACE FIFTY-FIVE FOOD & WINE

While the wine list selections span the globe, there's an emphasis on Canadian/Manitoba connections that runs through both the menu and the wine list. Those that aren't directly "connected" have been chosen for the wineries' commitments to sustainable practices. The food is upscale Canadian comfort food to be enjoyed in the heart of Assiniboine Park. *(BMS)*

55 Pavilion Cr., Winnipeg, MB, 204-938-7275

ONTARIO

TORONTO

UNION RESTAURANT

UNION has a short wine list, but there's virtually nothing I wouldn't want to drink on it, which is as rare as a four-leaf clover. Commanding the U-shaped bar, sommelier Christopher Sealy hand-picks every single wine for this hip downtown haunt based on exceptional price-to-pleasure ratio, and offers them up with a large dose of enthusiasm. *(JS)*

72 Ossington Ave., Toronto, ON, 416-850-0093, union72.ca

VIA ALLEGRO RISTORANTE

Via Allegro's diverse and well-constructed wine list is almost too large — this lofty tome can be a bit overwhelming when you are unsure of what you want, so take advantage of the skilled staff. Via Allegro also has one of the best selections of scotch I've seen in a restaurant. *(TF)*

1750 The Queensway W., Toronto, ON, 416-622-6677, viaallegroristorante.com

GLOBE BISTRO

This list features a good selection that is well-priced, with many hard-to-source wines from all over the world. Globe typically pours more than 20 wines by the glass, so it is a good place to go to experiment. The list is rich with Ontario selections and the team is very knowledgeable. It is neighbourhood casual, with the menu changing frequently to take advantage of seasonal ingredients. *(Steve Thurlow)*

124 Danforth Ave., Toronto, ON, 416-466-2000, globebistro.com

CRUSH WINE BAR Toronto, ON

Wine is the focus here, with many well-priced and innovative selections and a very talented wine team. Here they know which wine needs a carafe and it will be so served without the need to ask. The food is French-style bistro, but the atmosphere is more London, since it is housed in century-old building that is renovated in loft style. *(STh)*

455 King St. W., Toronto, ON, 416-977-1234, crushwinebar.com

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TERRONI

Featuring wine from all over Italy, with every selection well chosen for value and quality, this list is short on well-known labels — but you will rarely be disappointed. The food is well-priced and there is an amazing selection of pizzas, such that you will find yourself returning to try something different every time. You will never be disappointed since it's all good, wholesome stuff that is well presented. It does get noisy and very busy, so best to go early and avoid at peak times. *(STh)*

720 Queen St. W., Toronto, ON, 416-504-0320, terroni.ca

BELLEVILLE

CAPERS BRASSERIE & WINE BAR

A treasure trove of fascinating, bargain-priced, often-mature international wines (including German riesling and Burgundy) first assembled by sommelier Andrew Laliberte and now maintained by California-trained Astrid Young, one of the best food pairing palates I've run across anywhere. Local Prince Edward County wines are front and centre. *(David Lawrason)*

272 Front St., Belleville, ON, 613-968-7979, capers.ca

KINGSTON

OLIVEA

Chef Stev George's third Kingston eatery is a light-hearted Italian trattoria/bistro. The wine list — virtually all under $50 except for a small reserve list — has a smattering of interesting regional Italians, Prince Edward County standards, alongside fun finds like a California malvasia. *(DL)*

39 Brock St., Kingston, ON, 613-547-5483, olivea.ca

OTTAWA

NAVARRA

Chef/owner René Rodriguez has carved out a niche for Basque cuisine and tapas in the culinary embassy row called the Byward Market. Sommelier John Gross has assembled a well-priced list peppered with unsung Spanish regional wines that neatly provides international touchstones, as well. *(DL)*

93 Murray St., Ottawa, ON, 613-241-5500, navarrarestaurant.com

LE CLUB CHASSE ET PECHE

Montreal,QC

The wine list is Old World-dominant, but not old school, with some great selections outside the "traditional" wine regions of Bordeaux, Burgundy and Tuscany. The staff are great if you need a suggestion. *(GB)*

423 St. Claude, Montreal, QC, 514-861-1112, leclubchasseetpeche.com

PLAY FOOD AND WINE

Sommelier Grayson McDiarmid has it covered: 30 wines by the glass representing the spectrum of styles, from Chablis to zinfandel. There are plenty of Canadian and international selections and enough oddities — like malvasia from Monterey and zibbibo from Pantelleria — to keep even jaded drinkers playing happily, and returning regularly. *(JS)*

1 York St., Ottawa, ON, 613-667-9207, playfood.ca

THE WELLINGTON GASTROPUB

One doesn't usually walk into a pub to drink wine, but it's the thing to do at the Wellington. Publican Shane Waldron brings the concept to gastro level with an excellent, frequently changing menu, taps dedicated to microbrews and nearly 70 wines, including such cool picks as B.C. chenin blanc and Austrian blaufränkisch, served in appropriate stemware. *(JS)*

1325 Wellington St., Ottawa, ON, 613-729-1315, thewellingtongastropub.com

QUEBEC

STE-MARGUERITE-DU-LAC-MASSON

BISTRO À CHAMPLAIN

Where am I going if I ever win the 6/49? This place. With more than 40 pages of Burgundy, including the biggest collection of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti I have ever seen dating back the 1980s, this 175-page wine list is a wine lover's dream. *(Bill Zacharkiw)*

75 ch. Masson, Ste-Marguerite-Du-Lac-Masson, QC, 450-228-4988, bistroachamplain.com

MONTREAL

L'EXPRESS

L'Express has been doing a fine job for 20 years or so and whether you are looking for a classic Bordeaux or a non-sulphite Beaujolais, this has been, and still is, the reference when it comes to affordable and interesting wine lists. *(BZ)*

3927 rue Saint-Denis, Montreal, QC, 514-845-5333

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JOE BEEF/LIVERPOOL HOUSE
The list is a massive blackboard, filled with the hottest and most avant-garde wineries the world has to offer. Special attention is paid to Burgundy and the Loire. *(BZ)*
2491 Notre Dame W., Montreal, QC, 514-935-6504, joebeef.ca

KAIZEN
Yes, it's a sushi restaurant, and there are three pages of sake that are sourced from everywhere from Oregon to Japan. But, beyond that, the 15-page wine list is loaded with treasures. The accent is on Burgundy, with many of the regions newest star wine producers. Extra points for a lengthy list of Chablis. *(BZ)*
4075 Ste Catherine St. W., Montreal, QC, 514-932-5654,70sushi.com

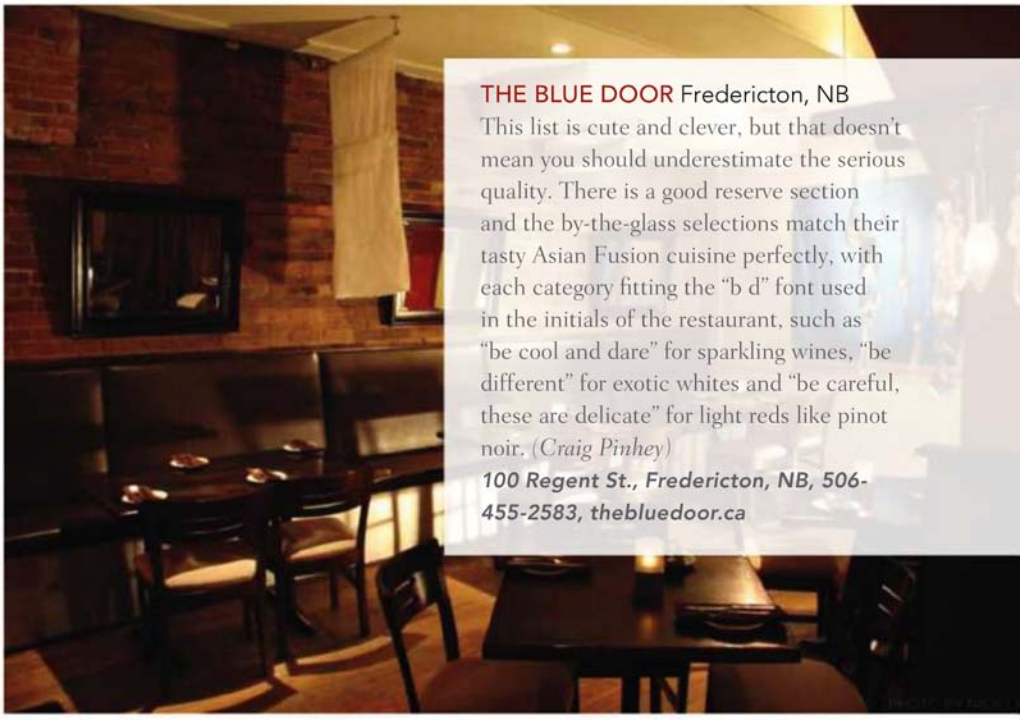
PETIT ALEP
Inexpensive, Middle Eastern-influenced cuisine and pages upon pages of well-priced and well-chosen wines from mostly European countries. *(BZ)*
191 Jean-Talon St. E., Montreal, QC, 514-270-9361

PIED DE COCHON
This restaurant is pure gluttony, both in terms of food and the wine list. The list, which features very reasonable markups and lots of variety, is not overly big. Rather than listing a large amount of producers, Pied de Cochon likes to showcase the depth of a single winery, so you will often find everything from the entry level wines all the way up to the high end. *(BZ)*
536 Ave. Duluth E., Montreal, QC, 514-281-1114, restaurantpieddecohon.ca

NEW BRUNSWICK

SAINT JOHN

HAPPINEZ WINE BAR
happinez is a dark basement of a tiny, funky wine bar, owned by Peter Smit, a Dutchman who has lived in New Brunswick for decades. It is unique in the region in that happinez uses a Le Verre de Vin preservation system so it can offer 26 well-chosen, fairly priced ($6-$11) vinos by the glass, with little risk of oxidized wine. *(CP)*
42 Princess St., Saint John, NB, 503-634-7340, happinezwinebar.com



THE BLUE DOOR Fredericton, NB
This list is cute and clever, but that doesn't mean you should underestimate the serious quality. There is a good reserve section and the by-the-glass selections match their tasty Asian Fusion cuisine perfectly, with each category fitting the "b d" font used in the initials of the restaurant, such as "be cool and dare" for sparkling wines, "be different" for exotic whites and "be careful, these are delicate" for light reds like pinot noir. *(Craig Pinhey)*
100 Regent St., Fredericton, NB, 506-455-2583, thebluedoor.ca

NOVA SCOTIA

WOLFVILLE

BLOMIDON INN
Besides featuring good local wine as house wines, sommelier Michael Laceby keeps a huge selection (40 pages worth) of wine at his family's gorgeous old inn. He has more interesting, aged wines than any other restaurant in the region, including some Nova Scotia favourites (like the Jost 99 Mischurinetz) and classics, including Mosel rieslings from the 1970s and a 1970 Castillo Ygay from Marques de Marietta for $295. *(CP)*
195 Main St., Wolfville, NS, 902-542-2291, blomidon.ns.ca

HALIFAX

FIVE FISHERMEN
Don't mistake this excellent restaurant for a tourist trap; cuisine is topnotch and sommelier Avery Gavel's wine list is terrific, with a solid international selection, plus a decidedly local angle. This is the best Nova Scotia wine list in the country, with the province's wines classified by sub-region. The list features 26 bottles in total, including 22 by-the-glass offerings at reasonable prices. *(CP)*
1740 Argyle St., Halifax, NS, 902-422-4421, fivefishermen.com

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

PORTUGAL COVE

ATLANTICA
Atlantica's wine list has a large selection of Bordeaux, Burgundy and Italian, and a small, but interesting, by-the-glass selection (good white Burgundy for $9, Cahors for $9). With options including some very interesting half bottles of red Burgundy, Atlantica definitely has the wine to match their deservedly highly-touted cuisine. *(CP)*
38 Beachy Cove Rd., Portugal Cove-St. Philips, NL, 709-895-1251, atthebeachhouse.ca/atlantica

ON THE WEB

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BUYER'S GUIDE

NEW RELEASES

ARGENTINA

RED

92 TRAPICHE 2006 Vina Federico Villafañe Malbec
La Consulta, Mendoza, Argentina
BC $45, ON $34

Big, peppery, liquorice, black cherry, savoury, vanilla nose, with clove, coffee, tobacco and strong floral undercurrents. Rich, full, round and supple palate, with ripe, fine-grained tannins. More coffee, vanilla, black cherry, plum, liquorice, poultry spice, tobacco, mineral and cedar flavours. Good length and finesse, without being heavy or alcoholic. A stylish effort that will further improve with 2 to 5 years of bottle age. Bravo, Argentina! *(ST)*

90 BODEGA POESIA 2006 Clos des Andes
Mendoza, Argentina
QC $29

Brings Argentine malbec to another level. This is not Cahors, but not that inexpensive Argentine malbec, neither. Has those pretty floral notes you get from the best Argentinian wines, but with very dark fruits and that earthy animal note and minerality one associates with the malbec wines from France's southwest. Finesse to spare. *(BZ)*

88 ACHÁVAL FERRER 2007 Quimera
Mendoza, Argentina
BC $50, AB $48, ON $55, QC $50

You can almost taste the grain of the freshly sewn oak. But, despite the fact it completely lacks any fun, this is a seriously well-made wine. The structure is beautiful, with a vibrant acidity and solid tannins. Smoke, vanilla, mocha and some dark, dark fruit. Rather brawny wine. *(BZ)*

88 DON MIGUEL GASCON 2008 1884 Reservado Malbec
Mendoza, Argentina
BC $17

Very spicy, orange, cherry jam, savoury, black olive, roasted mushroom, vanilla and tobacco aromas, with an herbal, meaty note. Very round, supple, easy palate with smoky, poultry spice, tobacco, olive, green herbs, orange, cherry jam and mocha flavours. Fresh, round finish for current consumption. Good restaurant wine. *(AG)*

88 MICHEL TORINO 2007 Don David Reserve Malbec
Cafayate Valley, Argentina
BC $14, AB $17, MB $13, SK $14, QC $16, NB $16, NL $16

Just the right amount of oak and dark fruit on the nose. Perfect acidity, ripe, but with tannins that still have some grit. Lingering notes of chocolate, spice and cassis in the finish. Not a blemish here. Impeccable, almost too much so, which is its only fault. *(BZ)*

88 TRIVENTO 2007 Golden Reserve Malbec
Luján de Cuyo, Northern Region, Mendoza, Argentina
BC $23, AB $22, SK $23, MB $23, ON $25, NS $24, NL $25

Round, supple, warm, fresh palate, with light, grainy tannins, cherry jam, pepper, curry, orange, chocolate, vanilla and tobacco flavours. Good finesse and fruit, with some obvious alcohol on the finish. Drink now or over the next 18 months. *(ST)*

ARGENTINA

WHITE

86 SANTA JULIA 2009 Viognier
Mendoza, Argentina
BC $12, AB $12

A drier version of this grape than the market leader from Chilean producer Cono Sur, but it isn't without its charm. More apricot and honey are in play here, with a flatter, perhaps oilier mouth. A perfect mid-week white for chicken or creamy pastas dishes. Fine value. *(AG)*

AUSTRALIA

RED

88 WOLF BLASS 2007 Yellow Label Shiraz
South Australia
BC $18, AB $19, MB $17, SK $19, ON $16, QC $18, NB $17, NS $17, NL $18

An attractive and robust shiraz. Good lift on the nose, with black cherry, plum, spice and dark chocolate. Good weight and sufficient acidity, with ripe tannin and lots of fruit follow through on the finish. This is built for grilled meat with a marinade and sauce. *(JD)*

86 PENFOLDS 2008 Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet
South Australia
BC $17, AB $17, MB $18, SK $18, ON $17, QC $18, NB $19, NS $18, PEI $13, NL $18

Black cherry and blackberry run the show on the nose, with vanilla, plum, cedar and light anise notes, as well. The black and red berry flavours are just tart enough, while the tannins are soft and the alcohol not too overbearing. *(BMS)*

AUSTRALIA

WHITE

88 GREG NORMAN 2008 Eden Valley Chardonnay
Eden Valley, Victoria, Australia
QC $23, NB $16

Despite what the back label notes say, this is closer to oaked Chablis than typical Aussie chardonnay, with chalky minerality and green apple/lemon on the nose, as well as some buttery lactic notes and a bit of oak. On the palate, it is light-medium-bodied, with a light touch of oak, more lactic character and a crisp, lemony finish. Drink with shellfish or lemon chicken. *(CP)*

NATIONAL TASTING PANEL

ANTHONY GISMONDI
British Columbia

STUART TOBE
British Columbia

DJ KEARNEY
British Columbia

TOM FIRTH
Alberta

BEN MACPHEE-SIGURDSON
Manitoba

DAVID LAWRASON
Ontario

STEVE THURLOW
Ontario

JOHN SZABO
Ontario

JEFF DAVIS
Ontario

BILL ZACHARKIW
Quebec

CRAIG PINHEY
New Brunswick

THE RATINGS

Wine Access provides opinion on wine quality with a 100-point scale. Our definition of quality is: pure and generous expression of the grape variety (or varieties) and origin as stated on the label. We look for purity (absence of faults), complexity, balance and depth. All the wines reviewed have been tasted within the last six months.

95 to 100 Outstanding qualities and exciting to drink. Defines grape and origin, with exquisite harmony, fascinating complexity and great depth.

90 to 94 Excellent quality, providing great pleasure to drink. Exemplary expression of grape and origin, and offers very fine balance, complexity and depth.

85 to 89 Very good quality and enjoyable to drink. Expresses its grape and origin well, and provides good complexity, balance and depth.

80 to 84 Good quality and drinkable. Recognizable grape and origin, perhaps masked by minor flaws. Balanced and basically correct, but simple.

Below 80 Has flaws that compromise character.

CANADA

RED

91 BURROWING OWL 2007 Cabernet Franc
Oliver, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada
BC $33, AB $35

This wine was a knockout at the *Wine Access* 2009 Canadian Wine Awards, and that is saying something given the numerous quality cab francs entered. This has a bit of that cheval blanc mineral thing under its ripe, rich, spicy, earthy, black fruit. Just a whiff of local sage pulls the entire wine together. It will keep a decade handily. In fact, in 2017 you might want to serve it alongside a cheval to see how they both hold up. Impressive, as always. *(AG)*

91 RAVINE 2007 Reserve Red
St. David's Bench, Ontario, Canada
ON $55

From Niagara's newest showpiece winery, this blend of 60 percent cabernet sauvignon, 25 percent merlot and 15 percent cab franc is very lifted, fine and fragrant on the nose, with well integrated cedar, blackberry, fresh herbs and background vanilla. It's mid-weight, sinewy and stylish, with considerable heat and tension. Quite dry on the finish, with loads of currant fruit, spice and tea-like tannin. Excellent length. Best 2011 to 2015. *(DL)*

89 SANDHILL 2007 Sandhill Estate Vineyard Block C8 Merlot
Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada
BC $35

Big, spicy, vanilla, tobacco, coffee, savoury, cedar, barnyard, cherry jam, gamey, warm kirsch nose. Round, rich, supple, but grainy, tannins. Clove, savoury, peppery, vanilla cream, coffee, chocolate, black cherry jam, tobacco and cedar aromas. Finish is very warm and oaky, but has ripe fruit and good concentration. Very modern style that needs 2 to 3 years to integrate. *(AG)*

88 THE OLD THIRD VINEYARD 2008 Pinot Noir
Prince Edward County, Ontario, Canada
ON $35

The debut vintage from this small, single-minded producer on Closson Road immediately joins the top echelon of County pinots, with refined layering of cran-beet fruit, spice, thyme-like herbs and minerality aromas all set in a fine, sturdy, if youthfully tannic, frame. Best aged another year or 2. *(DL)*

CANADA

WHITE

91 ORGANIZED CRIME 2008 Reserve Riesling
Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, Canada
ON $28

A really stunning auslese-level-ripeness nose, with plenty of sweet Anjou pear, ripe peach, apricot blossom and other exotic jasmine-floral notes. Despite barrel fermentation, there's nary a hint of wood to be found. The palate is dry, full and fleshy, with intense concentration, generous alcohol (14.5 percent) and a long finish. The finish is a little hot and acid is moderate for riesling, but this opens a whole new style category for Ontario riesling and shows the potential for a new wave style that will broaden the consumer spectrum for the variety. *(JS)*

91 ROSEHALL RUN 2008 Rosehall Vineyard Chardonnay
Prince Edward County, Ontario, Canada
ON $30

From chardonnay specialist Dan Sullivan, this is a stylish, refined and surprisingly deep chardonnay, with a very generous, rich nose of buttered popcorn, peaches and honey, butterscotch, toast and gentle wood spice. It's mid-weight, creamy, a touch sweet, but carries great acid grip and lemony and mineral tension. Some warmth, with excellent focus and outstanding length. *(DL)*

91 TAWSE 2008 Sketches Riesling
Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, Canada
BC $20, ON $18, NB $23

A superb value, and a gold medalist at the *Wine Access* 2009 Canadian Wine Awards — one of only 2 rieslings in Canada to win this distinction. Re-tasted months later, there is no let up. It shows an intense nose of lemon wax, petrol, spearmint and pear fruit, with a hint of honey. It's off-dry, very lively, yet fairly viscous, with acidity that slashes the sweetness. Excellent focus and length. *(DL)*

90 JOIEFARM 2009 Chardonnay Unoaked
Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada
BC $23, AB $31, QC $27

This is so bright, shiny and juicy that it almost has bling. Unoaked chardonnay should be more than "without wood." Something must replace it, and the best in Canada have not only the crispness of a Chablis (which is usually un-oaked chardonnay), but a certain green apple, lemon, herbal nuance. And, in many examples, an old cheddar aroma, as well. This wine has all of that, making it a classic of the genre. It's mid-weight, super fresh and bright, with just a bit of a mean, green streak. Excellent length. *(DL)*

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90 TWENTY TWENTY SEVEN 2008 Featherstone Vineyard Riesling
Twenty Mile Bench, Ontario, Canada
ON $25

New Zealand-raised winemaker Kevin Panagapka assists at Featherstone and bottles his own small batch of riesling from this site first planted in 1990. This has a terrific, complex nose of pineapple, pear, petrol and fresh mint. It's full-bodied, solid and well-balanced, with great palate presence. Excellent length, with a focused stony, lemony finish. *(DL)*

CHILE

RED

88 SANTA CAROLINA 2008 Dry Farmed Carignan
Valle de Cauquenes, Valle del Maule, Region del Valle Central, Chile
BC $19

You will love the peppery, black cherry, clove, floral, sage-scented fruit here, flecked with bits of orange and roasted coffee bean aromas. Round, supple, easy and dry on the palate, it comes with an agreeable freshness (acidity). Its orange, chalky, black raspberry jam, spicy, tobacco, herbal flavours, with light coffee notes and a savoury finish, flashes the "buy" signal. Simple, but well-made, with solid fruit expression and intensity. Grown on dry-framed, 80-plus year-old vines. Good value. *(AG)*

88 VINA CASABLANCA 2007 El Bosque Winemaker's Choice Carmenère
Rapel Valley, Chile
MB $20

The jammy blackberry notes on the nose of this carmenère are intense, supported by earth, dark chocolate, ash and light vegetal notes. It's ripe, viscous and full-bodied, with soft tannin and soft French oak adding texture to the ripe black fruit flavours. There's a splash of almost-green fruit, some earth and some light acidity here, as well, which adds complexity and would complement a peppery beef dish nicely. *(BMS)*

CHILE

WHITE

88 CASA LAPOSTOLLE 2009 Casa Sauvignon Blanc
Rapel Valley, Chile
AB $16, MB $15, PEI $14

Good varietal expression, with clean gooseberry and lime aromas, a bit of grapefruit, mineral and bell pepper notes. Palate is bright, though a bit tart, with apple and grassy flavours. Four months of lees aging creates a creamy texture and a touch of nuttiness. *(TF)*

87 VINA MAIPO 2008 Reserva Chardonnay
Casablanca Valley, Chile
MB $13

Vanilla, pineapple, mango, peach and some light spice mingle on the nose. Medium-plus-bodied, there's a great balance of buttery vanilla from the oak and light acidity. Among it all, the tropical fruit flavours are ripe, fresh and vibrant. It's an excellent chardonnay for the price that drinks well on its own or should pair well with some grilled salmon. *(BMS)*

FRANCE

RED

93 DOMAINE DE BEAURENARD 2007 Boisrenard Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge
Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France
BC $94, AB $89

Smoky, black pepper, garrigue, floral meaty, black cherry jam and liquorice root aromas. Ripe, rich round and supple, with good acidity, yet elegant and full. Persistent, long flavours of vanilla, orange, cherry jam, black berry confiture, smoke, pepper, meat and spice. Very fine fruit and structure; more acid and tannins than the regular version. *(ST)*

91 CLOS DE L'ORATOIRE DES PAPES 2007 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France
BC $50

Big, black cherry jam, liquorice, peppery, spicy, clove, anise, garrigue, meaty, black raspberry aromas. Rich, ripe, round, dry, supple palate, with light, grainy tannins. Lots of ripe orange, raspberry, black cherry, liquorice, white pepper, mineral, kirsch, chocolate, tobacco and vanilla flavours. Long, warm, fruity and fresh, with good extract. Enjoyable now, but will improve with 2 to 5 years age. Delicious. *(AG)*

91 DOMAINE DE BEAURENARD 2007 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France
BC $55, AB $46

Black pepper, garrigue, smoky, spicy, black cherry, plum, meaty, orange peel, floral aromas. Full, round, soft, supple and fresh, with good acidity and soft tannin structure. Black cherry, orange, plum, floral, liquorice, peppery, garrigue flavours. Very fruity, elegant, long, pure finish, with good acidity and balance. Drink now and for 5 years. Great for modern consumers. Good value. *(ST)*

88 CHÂTEAU DU TRIGNON 2005 Sablet
Côtes du Rhône Villages, Rhône Valley, France
BC $25

Sablet is hardly a household name, but the town sits between the more famous sites at Gigondas and Rasteau. This wine has a definite spicy, liquorice, mineral note on the nose and palate, with bits of pepper and garrigue or dried herbs. Aging takes place in a mix of old foudres and concrete vats, which explains the fruity, earthy finish. Try this with duck or rabbit. *(AG)*

88 VIEUX CHÂTEAU CHAMPS DE MARS 2006 Côtes de Castillon
Bordeaux, France
QC $22

Remarkably defined fruit, very ripe, tinged with oak, finishing on a note of sweetness. Ripe-styled, new Bordeaux that doesn't sacrifice too much tradition, but still for those palates used to a creamier-styled wine. *(BZ)*

FRANCE

WHITE

92 DOMAINE DE BEAURENARD 2007 Boisrenard Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc
Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Rhône Valley, France
BC $87, AB $88

All the different grapes are harvested and barrel-fermented together. Floral, spicy, honey, apricot, vanilla, lemon, mineral, ginger, almond aromas. Rich, ripe, round, elegant and fresh palate, with a light, oily texture — quite delicate. Spicy, mineral, chalky, floral, apricot, ginger, quince, citrus and nutty flavours. A tad warm, but very good finesse and balance, long and fresh. Only 10 barrels made. Drink now or 10 years down the road. *(ST)*

89 PFAFFENHEIM 2008 Gewürztraminer
Alsace, France
BC $20

Nutty, spicy, honey, apricot, lychee and ginger aromas. Fresh, round, slightly fat entry, but good acidity and sugar balance. Baked pear, honey, apricot, lychee, sausage meat and ginger flavours, with a lemon, orange finish. Good intensity and value. *(AG)*

88 JAFFELIN 2008 Les Chapitres de Jaffelin Bourgogne Aligoté
Burgundy, France
BC $19, AB $18, SK $23, ON $15, QC $16, NB $17

Delicate — it's a word you don't see too often anymore in wine descriptions. Nuance doesn't score much, I guess. This is aligoté. It's a bare-bones wine. It doesn't have explosive perfumes, it doesn't "goo" fruitiness. There is acidity, a touch of fat and just a hint of flowers and white citrus. Exceptional aperitif wine. Not sure how many people will like this. I do. *(BZ)*

88 MANCIAT-PONCET 2007 Pouilly-Fuissé La Maréchaude Vielles Vignes
Burgundy, France
QC $29

White fruit and minerality — like slicing a just ripe pear with a granite knife blade. Has a certain grittiness to it. Pulpous rather than buttery. Finishes mineral and fresh, rather than buttery and rich. Chablis, with just a touch more warmth. *(BZ)*

87 PIERRE ANDRE 2006 Reserve Bourgogne Chardonnay
Burgundy, France
NB $22, NL $20

Although 2006 wasn't heralded as a red Burgundy vintage, this straightforward wine illustrates it made very good whites that are great with food. This has a clean nose of pear and red apple, hints of lemon and mineral, with little to no oak. The palate is medium-bodied, with moderate fruit, balanced acidity, minerality, integrated oak and a dry finish. Not bad for around $20. Serve with basic white fish or roast chicken. *(CP)*

ITALY

RED

93 GAJA 2004 Pieve Santa Restituta Sugarille
Brunello di Montalcino, Italy
BC $229, ON $285, QC $224

Black pepper, savoury spice, cherry, cedar, toffee, tobacco, mint and pencil shavings all come out on the incredibly expressive nose of this Brunello. It's full-bodied, with an elegant viscosity and medium tannins. This allows the bright red cherry flavours to mingle with the earth, mocha and understated wood flavours on the palate. The acidity is tart without imparting a sourness, which suggests 5 to 8 years in the cellar might benefit the wine. Don't be surprised if you can't wait that long — this is a special Brunello indeed. *(BMS)*

91 ACCORDINI 2004 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Le Bessole
Veneto, Italy
BC $60, MB $55

Peppery, floral, chocolate, meaty, plum, black cherry, liquorice root and Christmas cake aromas. Round, supple, forward palate, with light, grainy tannins. Tobacco, coffee, vanilla, black cherry, plum, orange peel, kirsch, peppery and meaty flavours. Quite elegant, despite the warmth and somewhat fresh finish. Will improve with 3 to 5 years in bottle. Fine quality. *(AG)*

91 ALLEGRINI 2006 Palazzo della Torre
Verona, Veneto, Italy
BC $30, AB $29, ON $25

Palazzo is such an elegant wine when compared to so many modern reds that are heavy on fruit and oak. The blend is a 70/25/5 mix of corvina veronese/rondinella/sagiovese, all with a portion of ripasso. There is plenty of Italian dryness, but it sits in the background against the liquorice, red fruit and peppery, tobacco flavours. Serve it with Bolognese now, or wait another 2 years for perfection. *(AG)*

ITALY

WHITE

88 BOLLINI 2008 Pinot Grigio Volano, Trentino- Alto-Adige, Italy
BC $19 specialty listing, AB $17, ON $17

Honey, nutty, floral, quince, pear, anise and mineral aromas. Round, fresh, easy style, with a hint of sweetness. Pear, nutty, quince, lemon, floral, spicy, butter flavours. Good richness, with a slightly austere, tart finish. Not quite as expansive as the previous year, but still good. *(AG)*

85 GABBIANO 2008 Pinot Grigio Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy
BC $11, AB $13, SK $14, MB $14, ON $13, QC $12, NB $14, NS $12, PEI $15, NL $14

Floral, apple, quince, citrus and earthy aromas. Round, dry, fresh palate, with nutty, citrus, nectarine skin, spicy flavours, with a touch of butter and a short finish. Simple, food style at a fair price. The delicate nature of this wine would blossom under screwcap. *(ST)*

NEW ZEALAND

RED

92 ATA RANGI 2008 Pinot Noir Martinborough, Wairarapa, North Island, New Zealand
AB $80, ON $65

The 2008 is all about bright, floral, strawberry and raspberry fruit aromas, with a dusting of minerality and earth. The entry is delicate, but silky and round, with big, bright, red fruit flavours and smooth, supple tannins that slip effortlessly along the palate. The finish is long and lingering. A very fine pinot. This is the real thing at 2/3 the price of its Burgundy counterparts. *(AG)*

92 PEGASUS BAY 2007 Pinot Noir Waipara Valley, South Island, New Zealand
BC $63

Always a delicious version of the grape, this comes with a bright, black cherry colour. The nose is open, with spicy, smoky, rooty, cherry notes mixed with bits of compost, orange and strawberry jam. Beautifully polished, silky tannins make this very sippable. A supple, fruity, delicious pinot noir that represents the best that comes out of New Zealand. Attractive New World pinot that is every bit as exciting as top Burgundy. *(AG)*

90 WITHER HILLS 2007 Pinot Noir Wairau Valley, Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
BC $35, AB $46

Savoury, carrot top, celery salt, barnyard, strawberry, meaty, raspberry aromas, with a touch of tobacco. Fresh, round, dry, elegant palate, with very light tannins. Juicy, cherry, strawberry, celery, orange, vanilla, rhubarb, smoky, dried thyme and mineral flavours. The finish is rich and structured, if a bit tart. Great for pork or duck dishes. Very good effort. *(AG)*

89 ATA RANGI 2008 Crimson Pinot Noir
Martinborough, Wairarapa, North Island, New Zealand
BC $28

Crimson may be the archetypal New World pinot noir: half Burgundy (the good half) and half New World (the best half). The nose and palate are in sync, sharing a spicy, black fruit character and a long, silky smooth texture from front to back, with moderate tannins and a dry, earthy, savoury note throughout. Easy to drink now. Good value. Should be on every restaurant list in the city. *(AG)*

89 MOUNT RILEY 2008 Pinot Noir Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
BC $25, AB $23

Look for a floral, liquorice, spicy, orange nose, with a touch of caraway and curry spice. The palate is dry, round and elegant, with supple tannins. The flavours are a wild mix of tobacco leaf, caraway, carrot top, cherry, orange peel and strawberry flavours, with a touch of tea leaf. Good finesse. (ST)

NEW ZEALAND

WHITE

91 ATA RANGI 2008 Sauvignon Blanc
Martinborough, Wairarapa, North Island, New Zealand
BC $22

A fine alternative style to Marlborough. Look for a grassy, grapefruit, lemon grass and cooked gooseberry aromas, with slightly nutty, smoky notes. Ripe, rich, juicy, dry palate, with spicy, passion fruit, gooseberry, lemon, floral, mango, grassy and jalapeño flavours. Good length and concentration, with fresh acidity on the finish. Very classy and a good value. *(AG)*

90 MATUA VALLEY 2009 Paretai Sauvignon Blanc
Wairau Valley, Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
BC $30, NL $30

Big, grapefruit and lime zest, asparagus, passion fruit, Granny Smith, melon rind and gooseberry aromas. Fresh, crisp, juicy palate, with good finesse. Green apple, lemon nettle, asparagus, green melon, gooseberry and grapefruit flavours, with a smoky note. Good finesse and elegance, with a very crisp, Granny Smith, jalapeño finish. Needs a bit of time to integrate, but this is good stuff. *(ST)*

90 WITHER HILLS 2008 Rarangi Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc
Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
BC $27

Very intense jalapeño, asparagus, gooseberry, grapefruit rind, smoky and nettle aromas. Rich, round, textured palate, with a touch of sweetness and juicy acidity. Grapefruit, passion fruit, jalapeño, melon, lees, grassy and nettle flavours, as well. Good length, with a full finish. *(ST)*

87 MONKEY BAY 2009 Sauvignon Blanc
Marlborough, New Zealand
BC $15, AB $14, MB $15, SK $18, ON $13, QC $17, NB $19, NS $18, PEI $17, NL $17

A fruity and easygoing sauvignon that will work with salads or chicken roasted with herbs. Bright aromas of peach, nectarine, grapefruit and herbal tea. Good acidity latches on to the fruit and herbal layers. Good length. *(JD)*

86 MOUNT FISHTAIL 2009 Sauvignon Blanc
Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
BC $15 specialty listing

Bright, gooseberry, nettle and light jalapeño nose, with flecks of passion fruit. Round, fresh and elegant on entry, with a slightly sweet palate of green apple, passion fruit, interesting flecks of grass, asparagus, nettle and a lime rind finish. Solid fruit core, but the finish is a bit sweet and sour. Try this with Thai food. *(AG)*

PORTUGAL

ROSÉ

86 PINK ELEPHANT 2008 Rosé
Portugal
BC $13

Spicy, liquorice, floral, cherry, peppery, citrus aromas. Fresh, crisp, tart palate, with pomegranate, rhubarb, raspberry, mineral, spicy flavours. Very crisp, simple style that will handle most foods. Solid value. *(ST)*

PORTUGAL

WHITE

86 ALIANÇA 2009 Vinho Verde
Vinho Verde, Portugal
ON $8, NB $10

One doesn't expect a heck of a lot from vinho verde, except refreshment, and this has that. With a fresh green apple and citrus, mineral nose, this pale greenish wine is very light in body, with the requisite slight fizz, but makes up for it with tasty apple flavours (not unlike Mosel riesling) and a fizzy, citrusy finish, a bit longer than other vinho verde in the market. Enjoy chilled on the deck or with simple green salads. *(CP)*

SPAIN

FORTIFIED/DESSERT

90 EMILIO LUSTAU N/V East India Solera Sherry
Jerez-Manzanilla, Spain
BC $20/375ml, $37, AB $34, MB $17/375ml, ON $17/375ml

Nice walnut, ruby colour. Spicy, toffee, walnut, dried citrus peel, chocolate, cedar, tobacco nose, with some floral character. Rich, full, round, somewhat sweet style, but good acidity. Big rancio, walnut, toffee, orange peel, cedar, tobacco, earthy, peppery flavours, with some chocolate in the finish. Lots of intensity here for desserts or spicy food. *(ST)*

SPAIN

RED

95 BODEGAS ALIÓN 2004 Alión
Ribera del Duero, Castilla-Leon, Spain
BC $85 specialty listing, $160/1,500ml, $480/3,000ml, ON $81, QC $83

Alión is made not far from the River Duero and the famed Vega Sicilia. That said, it is an entirely different wine — modern, to begin with, and bold, with intense dark fruit and meaty, mineral, liquorice flavours. It is 100 percent aged in French oak, with substantial, round tannins in the back end. Very impressive now, but will clearly improve in bottle as it ages say 5 to 10 years. *(AG)*

86 CASTAÑO 2007 La Casona Monastrell
Yecla, Valencia and Murcia, Spain
BC $10

Super cheap and tasty. Look for black cherry, pepper, floral, chocolate notes, with savoury aromas. The entry is soft and supple, with a pinch of rustic tannins and good body. Chocolate, peppery, dried herbs, black cherry, fig and liquorice root flavours impress for the price. Good fruit and intensity makes this a great value. The wine is dry-farmed (no irrigation, which keeps yields naturally low) and the vines are 40 to 60 years old. All for around $10. Back up the truck and load up. (AG)

SPAIN

WHITE

87 TORRES 2008 San Valentin Parellada
Spain
ON $13, NB $13, NS $10

When it comes to the parellada grape, most Canadians only know of Cava, but this varietal wine shows how it makes a very serviceable, clean, fresh white. It has the green apple and citrus notes expected from the region and grape, alongside minerality, on the nose. On the palate, it is a light, clean, refreshing white, with citrus fruit, crisp acidity and a medium finish. Ideal for seafood tapas. *(CP)*

UNITED STATES

RED

92 CHAPPELLET 2007 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
Napa Valley, California
ON $69

A concentrated and well-balanced cabernet, with complexity and impressive structure. Aromas include blackberry, plum, herbal tea, earth, chocolate cream and wood spice. There is a solid fruit core amid spice, earthy mineral layers and firm tannin. The finish is elegant and long-lasting. Drink 2012 to 2020. *(JD)*

2007
BORDEAUX
Release

The 2007 vintage shows a deep colour and a fresh, complex nose of red ripe fruit.

The 2007 vintage deserves to join the group of the very serious wines. It shows a very beautiful success in its technical expression.
- Chateau Branaire-Ducru

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92 RAVENSWOOD 2005 Old Hill Zinfandel
Sonoma County, California, United States
AB $62, QC $70, NL $76

This top-shelf zin uses a total of 15 different varietals, with zinfandel making only 75 percent of the blend. Fantastic complexity all around, the nose literally dances with spice box, blackberry, cedar, ripe berry fruit and woody aromas. On the palate, big and dense, with big fruits buffered by meaty tannins and big acid. Worth tucking a few away for up to 2015 or so, or, if you plan on doing some grilling, this would be a great compliment to gourmet burgers or prime rib. *(TF)*

91 E&J GALLO 2006 Frei Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon
Napa Valley, California, United States
AB $30, MB $20, ON $24

Frei Ranch cabernet sauvignon seems to get better with each vintage. Compared to other cabs from California of this quality, it is well-priced and certainly delivers. Expect the nose to show cassis and blackberry fruit, with mocha, warm spice and forest floor accents. The palate is elegant, juicy and well structured, with lots of flavour. The focus is well maintained onto the very long finish. Best 2010 to 2016. *(STh)*

91 RAVENSWOOD 2005 Teldeschi Zinfandel
Dry Creek Valley, California, United States
BC $46, AB $50, QC $48

A bit hot at 15.5 percent alcohol, this is certainly not a wimpy wine. Rich on the palate, with red cedar, thick black cherry fruits and a spicy, slightly sweaty character. On the palate, big black fruits of cherry and blackberry, with dark bitter chocolate flavours adding to the fun. A bit abusive to the palate, but if you like big, beefy zin, you'll love this. *(TF)*

91 ST. CLEMENT 2006 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
Napa Valley, California
AB $46, ON $50, NL $50

A concentrated, complex and deftly balanced cab at a good price. Look for appealing blackberry, plum, dark chocolate, spice and dried fruit lift. A solid fruit centre is joined by good tannic structure, with toasty and spicy oak hints contributing to the flavour profile. Very good length. *(JD)*

90 STAG'S LEAP WINERY 2006 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
California, United States
AB $47, ON $50, NS $58

The 2006 Stag's Leap cabernet is starting to show some nicely evolved notes here, with savoury and complex wood spice, fruit and earth. The palate is full-ish and firm, nicely structured, with long finish. Fine example for current enjoyment or short to mid-term aging. *(JS)*

89 IRONSTONE VINEYARDS 2007 Old Vine Zinfandel
Lodi, California, United States
BC $20, AB $18, MB $15, ON $18, QC $18, NS $17

This offers excellent value for zinfandel, with its fresh nose of plum jam and blackberry, with sweet herbs and raspberry. The palate is very juicy, with lots of fruit flavour and the finish is very long and fruity. It has a good depth of berry fruit flavours, with spicy notes. Try with spicy beef stew and grilled vegetables — especially red peppers. Best 2010 to 2014. *(STh)* WA

ESSENTIAL ACQUISITIONS

Each issue, our editors huddle up and select a pair of can't-miss, quality wines that are readily available across the country. This issue, we highlight some lighter-style wines that meet the demands of warm summer days. Do not make the mistake of serving the whites too cold and the reds too warm.

88 DR. LOOSEN 2008 Dr. L Riesling
Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Germany
BC $19, AB $18, ON $15

Floral, red apple, citrus, matchstick, mango and slate aromas. Fresh, crisp, somewhat sweet, but elegant and delicate. Slate, lime, mango, white peach, floral and red apple flavours. Good, juicy finish, with a touch of Granny Smith. Ready to drink. *(ST)*

90 SPY VALLEY 2008 Pinot Noir
Marlborough, South Island, New Zealand
BC $30, AB $24, MB $24, NB $25, NS $30

The '08 Spy Valley is a killer little pinot that is both delicious and affordable. Mostly Abel clone, mixed with some 777, this is aged in 25 percent new wood which does little to interfere with its bright, mineral, fruit, fresh acidity and finesse. Looks like pinot, smells like pinot and tastes like pinot. All natural winemaking, and it shows. Incredible value. *(AG)*

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Commis chef Quinn Staple was awarded this very prestigious prize and will now represent Calgary in Vancouver for Canada's top position

| 2010 Fetzer Appetizer Challenge | First place
Chef's Laura Kennedy and Jinhee Lee

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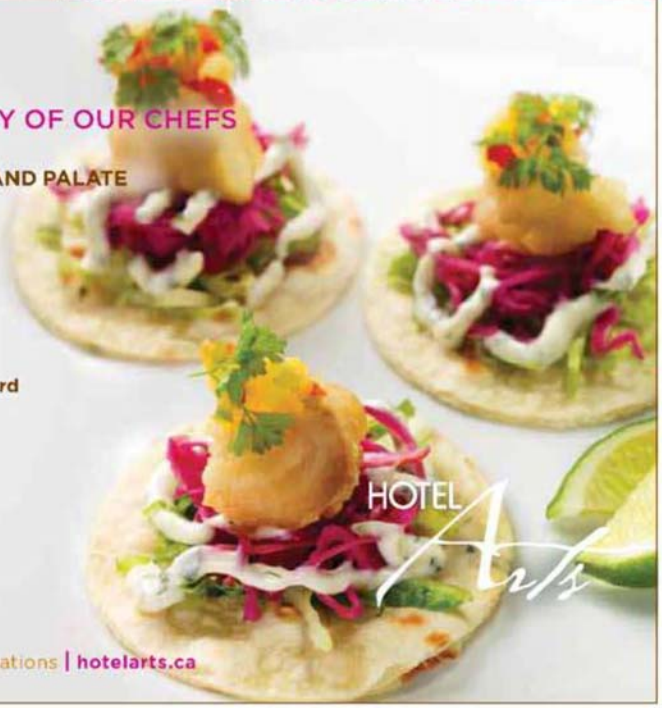

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More Than Just Tuscany

The wines of Northern Italy

Photo by Massimiliano Navarria

A vineyard in Northern Italy

All too often, we look to Tuscany to fulfill our Northern Italian red wine needs, but there is more to Italy's patchwork of appellations — especially in the northern reaches of the "Land of Enotria." Choices range from the bold reds of Piedmont's Barolos and Barbaresco districts, to the famed sparkling wines of Lombardy's Franciacorta region, Alto Adige's stunning whites and reds and the smooth, easy-sipping Valpolicella and its legendary amarone labels from the Veneto. With so much diversity, it is easy to see why the attraction of Italian wines is as strong as ever.

Whether you are rediscovering an old favourite, or looking for something new, Northern Italy is the place to begin your search.

95 **PIO CESARE** 2005 Barolo
Barolo, Italy
BC $82, AB $77, QC $62, NS $74

Still youthful, the 2005 is slightly stemmy, with tar and sweet black vanilla aromas, but it has structure and there is plenty lurking under the surface. Jaw-dropping, tannic and massive in the mouth, with intense dark berry fruits, tobacco/tar flavours and great depth. This is a keeper. Try one now, but wait at least 10 years before opening another.

95 **SEREGO ALIGHIERI** 2004 Vaio Armaron Amarone Classico
Veneto, Italy
BC $143, AB $120

The Vaio, which spends three years in Slovenian oak barrels, is only made in great vintages and the quality is readily apparent. Complex and evocative on the nose, smoky and herbal tones come to the fore, but are pleasantly wrapped around dense berry fruits, with mocha and leather. Robust and spicy on the palate, the wine is a touch too young still, but is continually evolving in the glass and with loads of structure. Cellar until at least 2012, but this is a long-term cellaring wine and should keep and improve until 2030 to 2040.

91 **ALOIS LAGEDER** 2004 Cor Römigberg Cabernet Sauvignon
Alto Adige, Italy
AB $60

Fantastic expression of cabernet sauvignon, with intense fruit and complexity. Fresh cedar, smoke, leather, chocolate, rich soil, eucalyptus, brine, blackberry and ginger notes. A bit of petit verdot in the bottle adds some floral character, while on the palate the flavours are true and elegant. Still very young, this was recently tasted along with the first vintage from 1989, which was still showing some power. Drink now, soon and through 2020.

91 PIO CESARE 2007 Fides Barbera d'Alba
Barbera d'Alba, Italy
AB $51, ON $45, NB $48, NS $48

This single-vineyard barbera is labelled "Fides," which translates to "trust" or "faith" in Latin. Although slightly clunky and smoky right now (after 20 months spent in medium-toast French oak), the nose shows plenty of classic barbera notes in a fairly masculine package that is perfect for big meals or big palates. A minimum 2 to 3 years cellaring should allow the flavours to integrate more, but this will knock your socks off then and well into the next decade.

89 PIO CESARE 2007 Barbera d'Alba
Barbera d'Alba, Italy
AB $36, QC $21, NS $36

A brilliant nose from this 100 percent barbera wine — coffee bean, spice, cedar, cocoa, and tobacco leaf, with tight berry fruit notes. The palate is lively, with more fruit than the nose and nice added complexity from the year and a half in oak. This potential cellar dweller is a steal.

90 MASI 2006 Brolo di Campofiorin
Veneto, Italy
BC $26, MB $27, ON $25, QC $26, NS $35, NL $37

A higher tier of the classic Campofiorin, with its semi-dried grapes and double fermentation, this bottling has an addition of about 20 percent rondinella. Deeply coloured in the glass, with a touch of plummy red, the nose is both jammy and spicy, with dried fruits, cranberry, leather, spice box and blackberry jelly. In the mouth — where it is velvety smooth and full-flavoured — look for the same flavours found on the nose, with a beautiful illusion of sweetness.

89 MICHELE CHIARLO 2006 Nizza La Court Barbera d'Asti Superiore
Asti, Piedmont, Italy
AB $62

The single-vineyard La Courte is top-shelf barbera. Lush and smoky on the nose, with some alcohol heat and salted chocolate, coffee, and leather notes. Look for candied cherry and black raspberry, as well. The wine is a touch lean on fruit for some palates, but shows power and depth, with an evolving range of flavours as the wine opens in the glass. You could drink it now, but the smart move is to wait until 2012 or so to start opening those bottles.

90 ALOIS LAGEDER 2008 Pinot Grigio
Alto Adige, Italy
AB $24

This is certainly not your everyday, run-of-the-mill pinot grigio. The Lageder is initially quite leesy and floral on the nose, while working towards herb, spice and apple notes, with a healthy dose of mineral tones of lime and soapstone. The palate brings more fruit and creaminess to the fore, while bigger acids and the lees aging should allow for short- to mid-term cellaring, and help it pair well with an impressive array of foods. Think savoury poultry and game, fish in cream sauces and sushi.

90 BELLAVISTA NV Cuvée Brut
Franciacorta, Italy
AB $21/375 ml, $45, QC $45

A pleasant glass of bubbly for any occasion. Light toasty notes, along with fresh citrus, baked pear, apple and decent, expressive mineral tones, finished off with a creamy mousse. Good acid structure and a pleasant finish that goes on for miles round out this excellent bottle of Franciacorta. Franciacorta can age just like champagne. Serve chilled.

91 CA' DEL BOSCO N/V Franciacorta Cuvée Prestige
Franciacorta, Italy
BC $49, AB $42, MB $50, ON $40, QC $38

This cool climate sparkling wine from Northern Italy is based on chardonnay, with pinot blanc and pinot noir rounding it out. Good mousse, with crisp apple fruits and a slightly baked note. There is plenty of biscuit and mineral, both on the nose and palate, in a refined and elegant wine. Made in the traditional method, the wine is complex, tasty and a perfect alternative to that *other* sparkling wine.

89 ALOIS LAGEDER 2005 Löwengang Cabernet
Alto Adige, Italy
AB $50

This is a blend of cabernet franc and sauvignon, with a touch of merlot. Rich and intense on the nose, with heady aromas of cedar, peppers, liquorice and cassis. Flavours stay true on the palate, with a few floral characteristics, while leather and tobacco complement generous berry fruits. Oak aging for 18 months softens still-firm tannins and provides a hint of sweet vanilla. Drink now or over the next 10 years.

89 MASI 2008 Masianco
Venezie, Italy
BC $16, NB $20, NS $18, PEI $19, NL $17

A blend of pinot grigio and verduzzo, the 2008 shows fresh sea salt, apple, fresh-cut wood and mineral notes, with a touch of match head and almond. On the palate, the wine is rich and full-flavoured for a white wine — part of which is due to the late-harvested verduzzo. Masianco is billed as a white super-Veneto and is the partner wine to the well-known Campofiorin. Serve chilled and it should go well with a variety of white-friendly dishes.

89 MICHELE CHIARLO 2007 Le Orme Barbera d'Asti Superiore
Asti, Piedmont, Italy
BC $24, AB $20, QC $16

Le Orme is the number one export wine from Michele Chiarlo and it will blow you away with its quality. A little more fruit-driven than some other offerings from Chiarlo, the '07 has fresh, spicy notes on the nose, with juicy, fruity tones and a cool, floral touch. Lighter in body, but clean, with woody flavours and ripe berry. Finish is good, but with a light touch of bitterness. This wine can age, but it will shine with hearty stews, game, hard cheese and rich sauces.

90 MICHELE CHIARLO 2009 Nivole Moscato d' Asti
Asti, Piedmont, Italy
BC $17/375 ml, AB $16/375 ml, QC $11/375 ml

Perhaps the best-known Moscato d'Asti to Canadians and often found in a half bottle, the Nivole is summer in a glass. Ripe melon and honeydew, with floral, honey, peach, mango and a soapstone minerality. Good mousse, the bubbles are tight and delicately offset the sweetness of the wine. Serve chilled and soon — this is not meant for cellaring. WA

ON THE WEB

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Speed Tasting

Wine marketing benefits when it steals a page from modern Cupid's playbook

I confess I have never taken a sommelier course, nor have I worked in a restaurant. I have, however, attended several thousand winemaker's dinners and wine tastings, which, I think, does make me a type of expert on the subject.

I'm not going to drone on about the behind-the-scene mechanics — suffice to say there is much that is taken for granted by the attendants at these gatherings. While most of us need never to worry about such things as table arrangements and the dish soap used on glasses, as consumers paying good money to go to a winemaker's dinner, there are three things we need to ask ourselves, or, better yet, ask the organizers before handing over our hard-earned money: will the actual winemaker be at the dinner? Will I have a chance to speak with him or her directly at my table? And will I be able to see all of the bottles of all the wines poured at the dinner?

While these may seem the most basic of questions, it is shocking how often organizers, and winemakers themselves, neglect these simple elements that make the event so worthwhile for the consumers.

These dinners often come at the end of a long day that began, for the winemaker at least, in another time zone. While I am sure it is a lot easier to chat with your distributor and the media than work the room, tell that to the consumer who paid $125 to be hosted by you. If the point is to build the brand and sell the wine, then the winemaker should be on the move all night, visiting each table in the room and making that all-important connection with the customers.

That's how wine is sold. The day following an event, names on menus, wine lists and store shelves mean nothing to consumers unless they can link them to a powerful memory of the event, the winemaker, the bottle and the label. That is why it is almost as important for attendees to get face time with the bottle as it is for them to get face time with the winemaker. On that note, please heed this message to wineries: if we do not see the bottles, we will never remember which wines we drank. Message to sommeliers and servers trained in Table Clearing 101: do not whisk away the empty bottle before everyone at the table has had a chance to make a connection with the wine, the speaker and the bottle itself.

Indifferent or distracted winemakers and missing bottles have become all too common at tastings and events. In my view, as a result, most of what passes for wine marketing is getting so old and tired, it requires a serious overhaul to have any real effect on the average consumer. But hope, and a new way of doing things, is out there. I was part of a groundbreaking new speed tasting event at the 21st annual Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival held this past April.

The concept behind speed tasting is the same as the one behind speed dating. Anyone familiar with speed dating will recognize the basic format, and for those who have never tried it, the set-up is pretty simple — it is a formalized match-making process, designed to encourage participants to meet a large number of new people in a short amount of time. Throw in elements of a formal wine tasting and there you have it.

The Speed Tasting event at Playhouse brought together 14 principals, 14 great wines and 84 tasters, each of whom experienced a short, intense meeting with each of the presenters, who were pouring out passion both from their souls and their bottles.

Each winery principal sat a table where they poured their marquee wine for six tasters who were given six minutes to taste the wine, ask questions and hear the story of the wine, the principal and the winery.

Ninety minutes later, everyone left the room with 14 fantastic stories, a taste of 14 great wines and a sense that they had experienced something few people ever do — namely, the chance to engage in one-on-one contact with some of the wine world's biggest names.

At $75 a ticket, it was the bargain of the year. Just ask anyone who tasted the Beaucastel 2007 Hommage, which retails for $350, with winery co-owner Thomas Perrin. They will never forget it. In fact, each attendee left the room with more than 14 stories — simply add to that number the personal story of their time spent with some of the most interesting and passionate people in the industry. The wines, the day, the bottles all become unforgettable, which, after all is said and done, is the real point of wine marketing, anyway.WA

Illustration by Pierre Lamielle

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